

FONDATION VINCENT VAN GOGH ARLES

Communication
and press relations:

PIERRE COLLET | IMAGINE
T +33 1 40 26 35 26
M +33 6 80 84 87 71
COLLET@AEC-IMAGINE.COM

ALICE PROUVÉ | IMAGINE
M +33 7 89 01 93 20
ALICE.PROUVE@AEC-
IMAGINE.COM

EXHIBITIONS

VINCENT VAN GOGH

“Van Gogh in Provence: Modernizing Tradition”

GLENN BROWN

“Suffer Well”

14.05–11.09.2016

This summer the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles holds its third retrospective devoted to the Dutch artist. Conceived by curator Sjraar van Heugten, *Van Gogh in Provence: Modernizing Tradition* is exceptionally important with regard both to the number of paintings on show and to their dialogue within the exhibition space, which is being redesigned specially for the occasion. Thirty-one works by Van Gogh allow us to comprehend how deeply his painting is anchored in the traditional genres to which he never ceased to lend new expression.

We are also delighted to present a solo show of British artist Glenn Brown, whose works fuel current discourses on contemporary painting. Oriented towards the present, they likewise maintain an innovative relationship with western pictorial tradition via the different styles translated by the artist. Brought together here, for the first time, are some thirty works from Glenn Brown's vast repertoire of paintings and sculptures, to which he has recently added drawings.

Bice Curiger, artistic director of the Fondation

Press preview: Friday 13 May 2016 at 1pm
Public opening: Saturday 14 May 2016 at 11am

“VAN GOGH IN PROVENCE: MODERNIZING TRADITION”

31 VAN GOGH PAINTINGS ON DISPLAY

The exhibition *Van Gogh in Provence: Modernizing Tradition* brings together 31 paintings – of which 29 have never before been shown in Arles – from the collections of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo.

The third retrospective devoted to Vincent van Gogh at the Fondation, it confirms the institution's major role in facilitating an ongoing examination of the artist's work and thinking, namely by presenting these latter in constant interaction with contemporary artistic production. Thus *Van Gogh in Provence: Modernizing Tradition* is accompanied by a concurrent solo show of British painter Glenn Brown.

Selected by Sjraar van Heugten, one of the world's foremost experts on Van Gogh, the 31 paintings on display offer a panorama of seven years of intense activity, culminating in the artist's stay in Provence, during which he produced some 500 works.

Over the course of the rooms, Van Gogh's palette becomes – as he puts it himself – more “exaggerated”, his brushstroke more forceful and his composition more audacious, yet all the while preserving a remarkable continuity in his choice of motif. Van Gogh constantly experiments with ways of modernising landscape, portraiture and the still life – the traditional genres to which he remains unwaveringly attached, following in the steps of his revered masters: Rembrandt, Hals, Delacroix, Millet, Breton and other artists of the Barbizon School.

The canvases that have been selected allow us to follow Van Gogh's artistic quest from its beginnings right up to his death: in Nuenen in the Dutch province of Brabant, where his humanism leads him to portray the rugged existence of rural peasants; in Paris, where he paints his own portrait for the first time and ventures upon vibrant colour contrasts in floral still lifes; in Provence, where he finds the glorious southern light and which exalts the face of nature; and finally at Auvers-sur-Oise, whose wheat fields captivate him one last time and open up the path to contemporary abstraction.

Curator of the exhibition: Sjraar van Heugten

“VAN GOGH IN PROVENCE: MODERNIZING TRADITION”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Vincent van Gogh is born on 30 March 1853 in Groot-Zundert in the Netherlands.

At the age of 16 he joins Goupil & Cie, a firm of art dealers in The Hague, and subsequently works in the company's offices in Brussels, London and Paris. Appalled at seeing art treated as a commodity and growing increasingly religious, he goes back to England to teach at a school and to preach the Gospel. He is 23 years old. Within 12 months he returns to the Netherlands and works in a bookshop before becoming a lay preacher in a mining community in Belgium. It is soon clear that he is unsuited for this role and his post is not extended.

In August 1880, at the age of 27, he decides to become an artist. To train himself, he copies prints by or after famous masters, notably Jean-François Millet. He longs above all to become a painter of peasant life and everyday reality. He reads the novels of Balzac, Hugo, Zola and Dickens, which reinforce his social convictions and his taste for the life of the working classes. Spurred by a real empathy for nature, he also pursues his love of landscapes. In 1886 in Paris he discovers Japanese prints and Impressionism and mixes with Toulouse-Lautrec, Pissarro, Seurat, Signac, Russell, Gauguin and Bernard.

Convinced that colour is the key, and with Eugène Delacroix and the Japanese masters as his guides, he leaves for Provence in search of the southern light under which colours are heightened. Dreaming of establishing a creative community with his artist friends, in February 1888 he settles in Arles. Here he further develops his ideas on style and technique and paints increasing numbers of landscapes, still lifes and portraits of local people. By the end of December, the first signs of his illness become apparent. Exhausted, he is hospitalized on several occasions and eventually enters an asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, where he remains for a whole year.

During the 444 days he spends in Provence, Van Gogh produces over 300 paintings and some 200 drawings. His art reaches the height of its modernity.

In May 1890 he settles in Auvers-sur-Oise, where Dr Paul Gachet keeps an eye on his health. In the space of two months, Vincent produces the final 70 paintings of an oeuvre that comprises more than 2,000 paintings, drawings and prints. On 27 July 1890 he shoots himself with a pistol and dies two days later at the age of 37.

His artistic genius, recognized soon after his death, the publication of his *Letters* in 1914 and his tragic fate make him, in the 20th century, a veritable international icon.

Previous exhibitions at the Fondation

- *Van Gogh Drawings: Influences and Innovations*, 2015
- *Van Gogh: Colours of the North, Colours of the South*, 2014

GLENN BROWN: "SUFFER WELL"

Among contemporary British artists, Glenn Brown is one of the most unusual and most unique. Yet the last retrospective of his oeuvre in France dates back to 2000. Largely unknown to the French public, Glenn Brown's art presents us with the suggestive force of his translations of reproductions of works by earlier masters, his "atomization" of painting, and the inexhaustible inventiveness of his practice, which appropriates the styles and outlines of drawings and classical paintings. Brown's interpretative, innovative hand brings to life an ensemble of marks and sinuous lines that interweave and echo each other on the surface of an artwork. Emanating from his works – whether drawings or paintings – is a plural, blurred and fluid reality, whose visual ambiguity evokes that peculiar to our own "postdigital" epoch.

The drawings Glenn Brown has been pursuing since 2013, as an autonomous means of artistic expression, maintain a thematic and visceral relationship with his paintings as well as with his sculptures. The majority of the sculptures on show here have been produced specially for the exhibition at the Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles. Glenn Brown's activities in three media – painting, sculpture and drawing – are thus seen side by side for the first time in the context of a major exhibition.

As in the exhibition *Van Gogh in Provence: Modernizing Tradition*, the genres that Glenn Brown treats in his oeuvre belong to a western visual tradition. The portrait and the still life reflect the conventions of different styles and epochs – German Realism, mannerism, the Baroque and modernism – which the artist invokes via his paintings and drawings. The European painters of the past provide him with a set of references that he acknowledges as the starting points for his own interpretations. Glenn Brown thereby distances himself from the original, which he atomizes and renders more complex.

In his sculptures *Armand Roulin* and *Boucher Blob B*, both created for this exhibition, Glenn Brown respectively takes Vincent van Gogh's portrait of the Arles postman and his *Field with Irises near Arles* (1888) as his point of departure. Basing himself on colour reproductions of Van Gogh's originals, he has "overpainted" bronze busts, masking them beneath thick layers of paint in a medley of hues. This profusion of tactile matter dialogues with the flat canvases, which likewise give the impression of an interplay of textures and feverish visual masses.

Curator of the exhibition: Bice Curiger

GLENN BROWN: "SUFFER WELL"

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1966 in Hexham (Northumberland), in the northeast of England, Glenn Brown lives and works chiefly in London. In 1989 he took part in the touring exhibition *New Contemporaries*, dedicated to emerging young artists working in Britain. Three years later, he completed his MA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College (London).

Since the start of his career, Glenn Brown's art has been based on innovative methods of appropriating and reconfiguring works belonging mainly to the past. In his first solo show in France, for example, held in 2000 at the Centre d'art contemporain at the Domaine de Kerguéhennec in Bignan, the artist presented paintings imprinted with multiple references to the works of Salvador Dalí, the existentialist portraits of the British artist Frank Auerbach, and illustrations issuing from the universe of science fiction. He also showed sculptures that already corresponded to his works in two-dimensions with their smooth surfaces and deceptive looks.

Thanks to his perfect mastery of the *trompe-l'œil* technique, Glenn Brown succeeds in infusing his pictures with the illusion of depth. His use of a slightly garish palette, combined with a proliferation of marks and lines of all kinds, confers upon his works an expressive, reinvented classicism, a subjective mannerism, which continues right up to the present.

His work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions with evocative titles both in Britain and abroad, signalling his role in the renewal of contemporary painting: a painting that looks at the history of western art in order to "digest" and "transform" its given styles, and subsequently to produce a psychological landscape and an idiosyncratic universe.

Previous exhibitions (selection)

- *Gagosian, Frieze London, Frieze Masters*, London, England, 2015
- *Riotous Baroque: From Cattelan to Zurbarán*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 2013
- *Cher Peintre: Peintures figuratives depuis l'ultime Picabia*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, 2002
- *Hypermental: Rampant Reality 1950–2000, from Salvador Dalí to Jeff Koons*, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, Switzerland, 2000
- *About Vision: New British Painting in the 1990s*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, England, 1996

“SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS”

YES, THESE EYES ARE THE WINDOWS

Shown in conjunction with the preceding exhibitions at the Fondation from February to April 2016, the film *Yes, These Eyes Are the Windows* (2015) by Saskia Olde Wolbers is once again being presented in its own room.

This film revisits the unusual past of the house at 87 Hackford Road in the Brixton area of south London where Van Gogh lived from 1873 to 1874. On the basis of his letters and different accounts relating to his brief stay in this terraced house, Saskia Olde Wolbers creates a video piece combining fantasy with realism, in which her free interpretation of the facts mingles with elements of reality.

The house, in the role of narrator, unfolds a fiction about the layers of myth that have settled upon the artist and about his ghostly influence on the fate of the house and its subsequent owners. Organic and talkative, this storyteller built of bricks and wood conducts us into its universe of fluid outlines, a mosaic of visual and documentary elements.

The work *Yes, These Eyes Are the Windows* is the fruit of a production in two stages. It was first presented in 2014 as a site-specific audio installation in Van Gogh's house in Brixton, as the culmination of a two-year collaboration with the London-based art association Artangel. In 2015 it was then created as a film.

Exhibition curators: Bice Curiger and Julia Marchand

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dutch artist Saskia Olde Wolbers, born in 1971 and living in the UK, has been working with video since the mid-1990s.

Her short productions are meticulously elaborated microcosms that blend fictional scenarios, documentary facts and fantastical environments. Sustained by a narrative that is delivered – anonymously and out of sync – by an off-screen voice, and which attests to the artist's fascination with the transmission of histories, these videos mirror the question as to the credibility of today's profusion of information. Simultaneously aerial and aquatic, Saskia Olde Wolbers's fluid universe oscillates between utopia and nightmare: like images in a darkroom, these stories prove to be at once reality and illusion.

Represented in numerous museums, collections, galleries and public spaces, Saskia Olde Wolbers has won multiple awards.

Previous exhibitions (selection)

- *Yes, These Eyes Are the Windows*, Artangel, London, 2014; *Art Unlimited*, Art Basel, 2014
- *Kinemacolor*, M-Museum, Louvain, Belgium, 2013; Ota Fine Arts in Tokyo and Singapore, 2013
- Maureen Paley, London, 2012
- *Seven Screens*, OSRAM, Munich, 2011; *A Shot in the Dark*, Secession, Vienna, 2011
- Goetz Collection, Munich, 2010
- Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, 2008; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2008

THE FONDATION VINCENT VAN GOGH ARLES: FULFILLING VINCENT'S WISH

"And I hope that later on, other artists will emerge in this beautiful part of the country."

Letter from Vincent to his brother Theo (Arles, Monday 7 May 1888)

In 1983 an association was founded by Yolande Clergue with the aim of inviting contemporary artists to present a work in homage to Van Gogh. Thanks to patron Luc Hoffmann, in 2010 the association became a public utility foundation. The City of Arles placed at its disposal a prestigious building which, renovated and transformed, was inaugurated in April 2014 by Maja Hoffmann, the current president of the Fondation.

The design concept by the architectural agency FLUOR embraces the rich history of the site, while treating the 1000 m² of exhibition space in a resolutely contemporary manner. It thereby incorporates two permanent artworks — by Raphael Hefti and Bertrand Lavier — which link the interior and exterior spaces and which respectively allow Van Gogh's iridescent colours and his "Vincent" signature to shine forth.

Thanks to partnerships established with public and private collections, including the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo in the Netherlands, the Fondation plays continuous host to one or more original canvases by Vincent van Gogh.

It assumes an innovative role in encouraging the public to rediscover the art and thinking of Van Gogh in constant interaction with contemporary artistic production. Conscious of the historical dimension of art and of its reception by society, the artistic director of the Fondation, Bice Curiger, seeks to generate a creative energy by provoking productive confrontations.

Thus the Fondation fulfils the wish, cherished by the world's most famous painter, to create in Arles a place of reflection and of free and abundant creation; a place where, much like the wind and river that pass through the city, ideas and exchanges can flow.

Van Gogh in Provence: Modernizing Tradition, our third major Van Gogh retrospective, focuses on a theme emblematic of the Fondation: that of artistic heritage and its transformation.

"Then, as you well know, I love Arles so much, [...]"

Letter from Vincent to Theo (Arles, Monday 18 February 1889)

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www.fondation-vincentvangogh-arles.org

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SELECTION OF WORKS ON SHOW — VINCENT VAN GOGH



Self-Portrait with Grey Felt Hat, Paris, September–October 1887

Oil on canvas, 44.5 x 37.2 cm

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Café Table with Absinthe, Paris, February–March 1887

Oil on canvas, 46.3 x 33.2 cm

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Fishing Boats on the Beach at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, Arles, June 1888

Oil on canvas, 65 x 81.5 cm

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Pollard Willows at Sunset, Arles, March 1888

Oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, 31.6 x 34.3 cm

Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



An Old Woman of Arles, Arles, February 1888

Oil on canvas, 58 x 42 cm

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

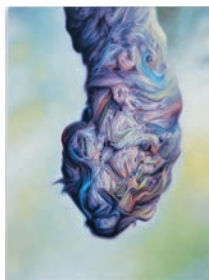
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SELECTION OF WORKS ON SHOW — GLENN BROWN



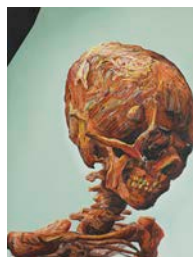
The Suicide of Guy Debord,
2001
Oil on panel
62.5 x 46 cm
Courtesy and photo credit:
the artist



Misogyny, 2006
Oil on panel
159 x 122.5 cm
Private collection
Photo credit: Jörg von
Bruschhausen



Armand Roulin, 2016
Oil paint and acrylic over
steel structure and bronze
88 x 66 x 66 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photo credit: Edgar Lagunia

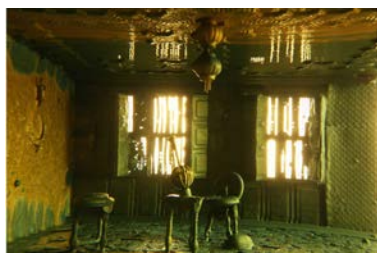


Suffer Well, 2007
Oil on panel
157 x 120 cm
The V-A-C Collection,
Moscow
Photo credit: Robert
McKeever



*Drawing 13 (after Greuze/
Rubens)*, 2015
Indian ink on paper,
Pergamenata White
50 x 40.8 cm, framed 72.3
x 62.6 x 3 cm
Courtesy and photo credit:
the artist

VIDEO STILL FROM YES, THESE EYES ARE THE WINDOWS — SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS



Saskia Olde Wolbers, *Yes These Eyes Are the Windows*,
2015
HD video, 18 min. Voice-over: Tom Brooke
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London

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Press preview: Friday 13 May 2016 at 1pm
Public opening: Saturday 14 May 2016 at 11am

FONDATION VINCENT VAN GOGH ARLES
35^{TER} rue du Docteur Fanton
13200 Arles
T. : +33 (0)4 90 93 08 08
contact@fvvga.org
www.fondation-vincentvangogh-arles.org

OPENING HOURS

Fondation and bookshop open from Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 6pm (extended opening hours every Thursday from 11am to 9pm).

Last admission 45 minutes before closing.

From 4 to 10 July: open from 11am to 9pm.

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Communication
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PIERRE COLLET | IMAGINE
T +33 1 40 26 35 26
M +33 6 80 84 87 71
COLLET@AEC-IMAGINE.COM

ALICE PROUVÉ | IMAGINE
M +33 7 89 01 93 20
ALICE.PROUVE@AEC-
IMAGINE.COM

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