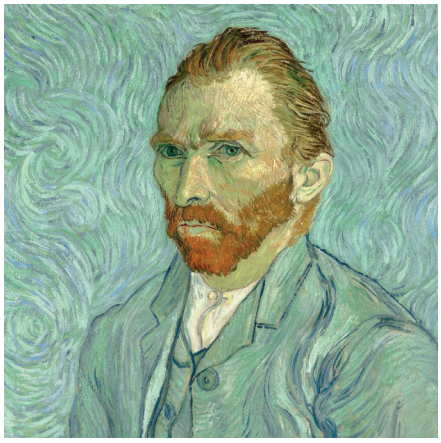
Van Gogh Alive
the experience

Accessible Information Pack



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WHAT IS SENSORY4™?

Developed by **Grande Exhibitions**, **SENSORY4™** is a unique system that combines multichannel motion graphics, cinema quality surround sound and up to forty high-definition projectors to provide one of the most exciting multiscreen environments in the world.

This Accessible Information Pack has been created by **Birmingham Hippodrome**, **Deaf Explorer** and **Sightlines**; to accompany visits to Van Gogh Alive in Edinburgh, March - July 2022.

Van Gogh Alive

Van Gogh's works have been displayed and enjoyed around the world for over a century - but never like this. Forget traditions of tiptoeing through silent galleries and viewing paintings from afar - Van Gogh Alive will have you interacting with art in ways you never imagined.

From the moment you enter, a powerful and vibrant symphony of light, colour and sound compels you to leave the world behind and immerse yourself in Van Gogh's paintings.

Vincent Willem van Gogh was born in 1853 in a small town in the south of the Netherlands. Vincent became aware from an early age of the divide between his own middle-class upbringing and the poverty-stricken lives of the local labourers.

Leaving school at 16, Vincent began work at an art dealership in which his uncle was a partner; organising exhibitions, selling original and reproduced artworks - and seeing the prices they were fetching. Vincent was exposed to a wide range of paintings at home, in London and Paris, planting the seed for an enduring passion for painting.

In his early 20s, Vincent unsuccessfully studied theology then briefly served as a missionary. In 1880, at the age of 27, Vincent finally turned to art: inspired by Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, and heavily influenced by artists of the time such as Monet and Gauguin. He had found his calling.

Completely self-taught, Van Gogh was one of the most prolific artists of his time. In only ten years, he produced more than 2,000 works of art, consisting of around 930 paintings and 1,100 drawings and sketches.

Despite this great volume of work, The Red Vineyard is the only piece known to have sold during his lifetime.

Van Gogh was constantly inspired by the changing landscapes and people that surrounded him throughout his ten-year artistic journey.

Distinct changes can be seen in his use of colour, light, style and technique; reflecting underlying changes in his state of mind.

Van Gogh Alive explores these changes in shifting 'movements', or chapters. Each movement is accompanied by a musical score that echoes the emotions and experiences that underlie Van Gogh's work through the many phases of his artistic life.

We begin in Vincent's homeland, the Netherlands, through his stylistically dark 'Dutch' period of subdued, earthy tones: distinctly different to the vibrant style that would emerge over the following years, laying the foundations for 'modern' art.

From the Netherlands, we move to France. Inspired by the energy of Paris and the Impressionist painters, Vincent began to develop a brighter palette and transform into the celebrated style for which he is known.

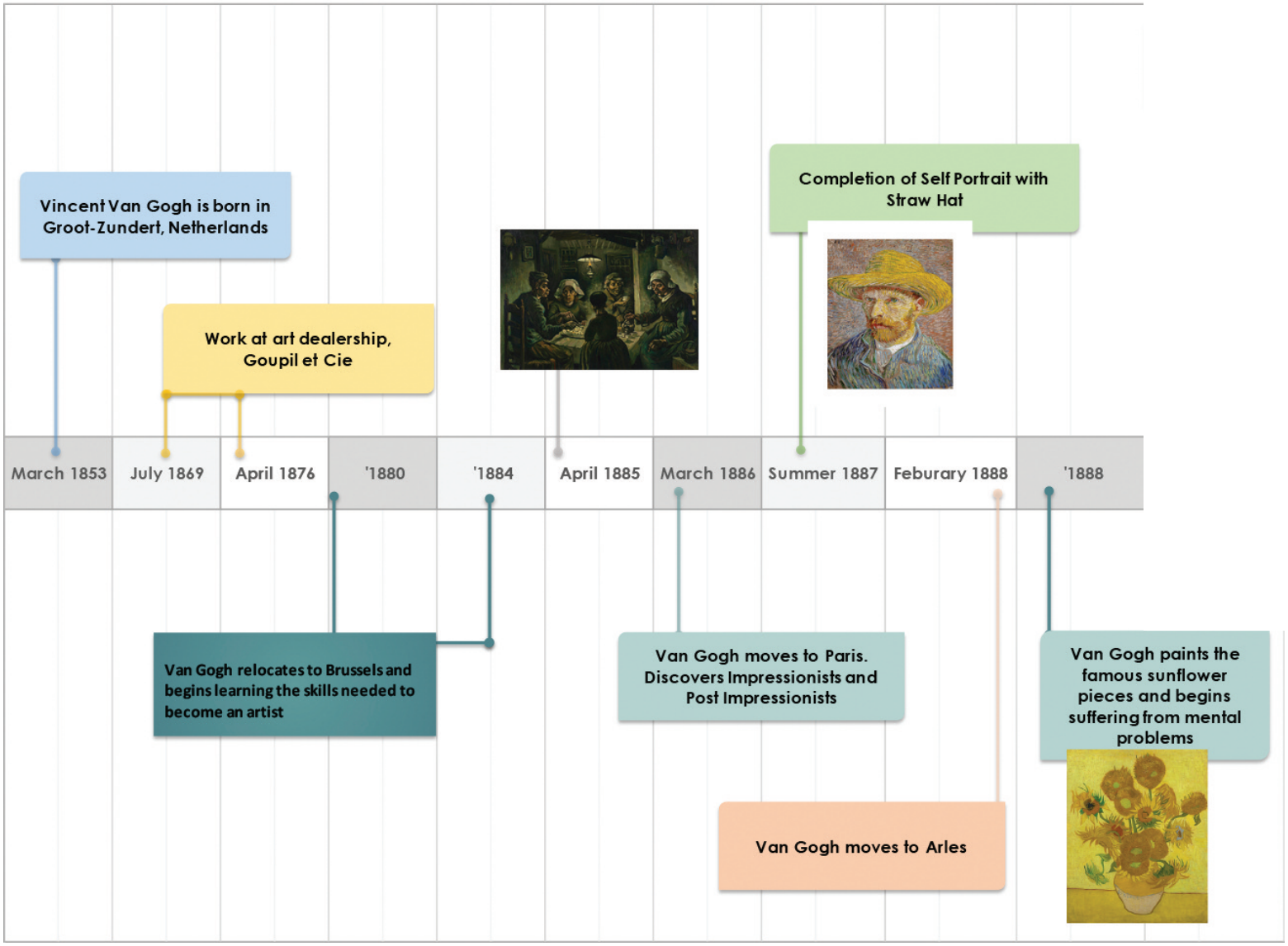
We make our way to the south of France from Paris to Arles. Van Gogh's time in this region was perhaps the happiest of his life, and certainly the most productive: his optimism clearly evident through the Sunflower series and his love for Japanese art.

Vincent's Bedroom in Arles marks a turning point in his emotional instability, and downward spiral into mental illness.

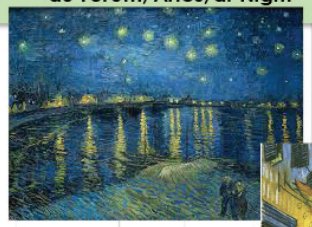
Over the last ten years of his life, Van Gogh expressed himself in over 800 letters, providing an amazing insight into his personal and artistic journey.

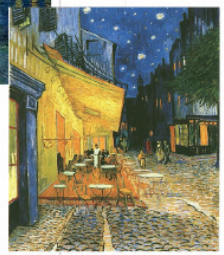
During Van Gogh's voluntary commitment to the asylum at Saint-Remy, he produced both tortured and peaceful landscapes, leaving us with a glimmer of hope embodied by the Starry Night.

Vincent's sense of emptiness is almost palpable in his haunting final works, featuring the wide-open spaces of Auvers-sur-Oise; concluding with his most evocative and elemental piece, Wheat Field with Crows, offering a candid insight into the artist's emotional turmoil in his final days.


Vincent Van Gogh is born in Groot-Zundert, Netherlands
Work at art dealership, Goupil et Cie
Completion of Self Portrait with Straw Hat
March 1853
July 1869
April 1876
'1880
'1884
April 1885
March 1886
Summer 1887
Feburary 1888
'1888
Van Gogh relocates to Brussels and begins learning the skills needed to become an artist
Van Gogh moves to Paris. Discovers Impressionists and Post Impressionists
Van Gogh moves to Arles
Van Gogh paints the famous sunflower pieces and begins suffering from mental problems

Completion of Starry Night Over the Rhone, The Café Terrace on the Place du Forum, Arles, at Night

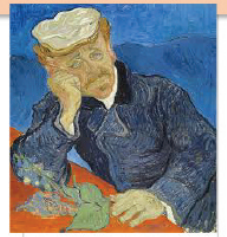




Completion of Irises

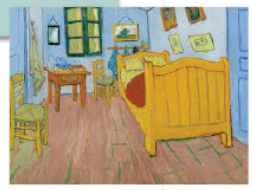
Completion of Starry Night

Van Gogh leaves Saint Rémy and begins contacting his brother Theo. Leaves the asylum to begin care in Auvers-sur-Oise under Dr. Paul Gachet

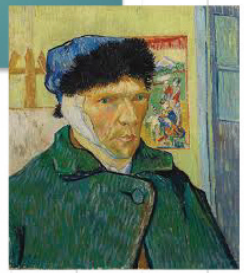


September 1888	October 1888	December 1888	May 1889	June 1889	February 1890	May 1890	29/07/1890		

Vincent's Bedroom in Arles



Van Gogh cuts off a portion of his ear and commits himself to a mental asylum in Saint Rémy



Completion of Almond Blossom

Vincent Van Gogh dies of a self-inflicted gunshot

Guide to the Music of Van Gogh Alive

Van Gogh Alive is set to a classical music score that reflects the emotional turbulence of Van Gogh's life.

For Deaf and hard of hearing audiences, we wanted to describe some of the musical score that is played during the experience.

The experience is divided into movements. We have described some highlights of the score for each movement.

Self-Portraits

Antonio Vivaldi - Le quattro stagioni, Tormenta: From Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons,' the word tormenta means storm.

Matched with the self-portraits Van Gogh painted throughout his life, the music reflects his inner turmoil.

The Netherlands

Oliver Ledbury - Skye At Night

Potato Eaters - Atmospheric, bleak violin over continuous drone.

Paris

Ian Hughes - Fromage Français

A typical, happy, traditional-sounding French tune played on the accordion.

J.S Bach - Cello Suite No. 1 for cello & strings

An uplifting expansive piece played on the cello.

Erik Satie - Gymnopédie No.1

Satie was a French composer and pianist. This piece is slow and melodic, almost melancholic.

Japan

Unknown - Sakura Sakura

Sakura sakura means 'cherry blossoms' in Japanese. The music is a traditional Japanese folk song, celebrating the beauty of cherry blossoms in full bloom.

Arles

J.S Bach / Charles Gounod - Prelude No. 1 in C Major

The music begins feeling light and romantic, however the music then starts changing key which subtly alters the mood, giving darker undertones to the romance, leaving the audience unsettled.

Erik Satie - Gnossienne No.1

Played on the piano, the mood is thoughtful and brooding. Feelings of timelessness and infinity come from the work's cyclical nature - you could leave the piece of music on repeat and never distinctly hear a beginning or an ending.

Saint-Rémy

Camille Saint-Saëns - Danse Macabre

Danse Macabre means the Dance of Death. The theme of the music is the universality of death: no matter who you are or where you are from, everyone eventually dies. The Danse Macabre unites all.

Camille Saint-Saëns - Carnival of the Animals No.7, Aquarium

Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns was afraid that people would not consider him a serious composer if they heard The Carnival of the Animals. He stipulated in his will that it could not be published until after his death.

In a small parallel to Van Gogh, the only movement in Saint-Saens' Carnival of the Animals, that was published during the composer's lifetime, was The Swan. He could have no idea how famous his music would become, much like Van Gogh's paintings.

Auvers-sur-Oise

This movement includes a sound effect of a gunshot. A few days after Van Gogh completed his painting of Wheatfield with Crows (July 1890) he walked into the same field and shot himself.

Eulogy

George Frederic Handel - Sarabande

A sarabande is a dance that originated in Central America back in the sixteenth century. Handel adopted the sarabande and his version is a stately and mournful work.

Van Gogh Quotes

Self-Portraits: With grey felt hat, with straw hat, with bandaged ear, Self-Portrait 1889

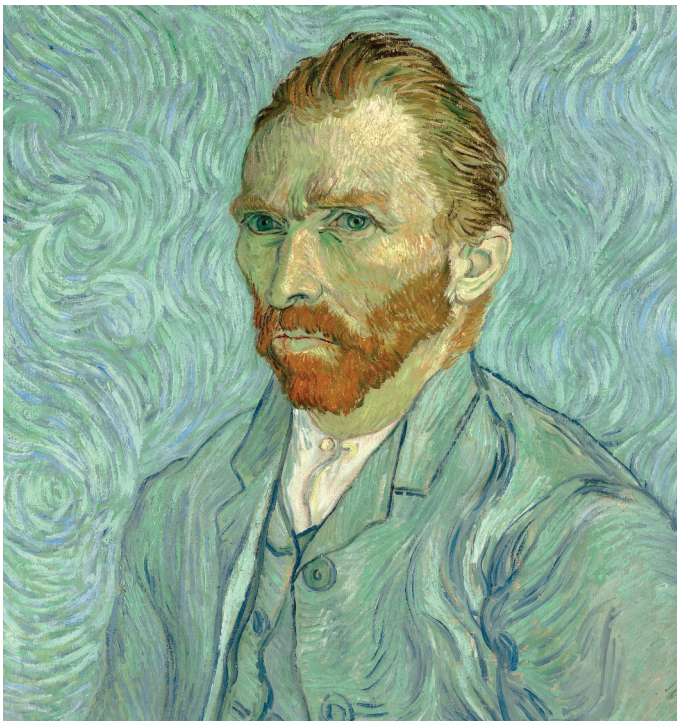
I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people.

I dream of painting and then I paint my dream.

Vincent's Bedroom in Arles

The only time I feel alive is when I'm painting.

I want to touch people with my art. I want them to say 'he feels deeply, he feels tenderly'.



Irises

If you truly love nature, you will feel beauty everywhere.

What colour is in a picture, enthusiasm is in life.

I work as diligently on my canvases as the labourers do in their fields.

Cafe Terrace at Night

I have tried to express the idea that the café is a place where one can ruin oneself, go mad or commit a crime.

The way to know life is to love many things.

Be clearly aware of the stars and infinity on high. Then life seems almost enchanted after all.

Blossoming Almond Tree

I experience a period of frightening clarity in those moments when nature is so beautiful. I am no longer sure of myself, and the paintings appear as in a dream.

Paintings have a life of their own that derives from the painter's soul.

Sunflowers

Though I am still in the depths of misery, there is still calmness, pure harmony and music inside me.

A great fire burns within me, but no one stops to warm themselves at it, and passers-by only see a wisp of smoke.

I wish they would only take me as I am.

Starry Night

I don't know anything with certainty, but seeing the stars makes me dream.

The emotions are sometimes so strong that I work without knowing it. The strokes come like speech.

The more I become decomposed, the more sick and fragmented I am, the more I become an artist.

Line sketches and drawings

Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.

In an artist's life, death is perhaps not the most difficult thing.

In spite of everything, I shall rise again; I will take up my pencil, which I have forsaken in my great discouragement, and I will go on with my drawing.

Seeing that I am busily occupied with myself just now, I want to try to paint my self-portrait in writing.

Self-Portraits

I am seeking, I am striving, I am in it with all my heart.

You can't be at the pole and equator at the same time. You must choose your own line, as I hope to do, and it will probably be colour.

In either figure or landscape I wish to express not sentimental melancholy, but serious sorrow.

Still Life with Quince Pears

There is but one Paris and however hard living may be here, and if it became worse and harder even, the French air cleans up the brain and does good - a world of good.

I would rather die of passion than of boredom.

The painter of the future will be a colourist in a way no one has been before.

Two Cut Sunflowers

These are colours that cause each other to shine brilliantly, which form a couple that complete each other.

I have nature and art and poetry, and if that is not enough, what is enough?

Sunflowers

In a certain way I am glad I have not learned painting.

The sunflower is mine, in a way.

How lovely yellow is! It stands for the sun.

Starry Night over the Rhône

To do good work, one must eat well, be well housed, have one's fling from time to time, smoke one's pipe, and drink one's coffee in peace.

As a suffering creature, I cannot do without something greater than I - something that is my life - the power to create.

Someday death will take us for another star.

Wheat Field with Crows

I will not live without love.

I put my heart and soul into my work and have lost my mind in the process.

I feel a certain calm. There is safety in the midst of danger. What would life be if we had no courage to attempt something?

Willows at Sunset

I can't change the fact that my paintings don't sell. But the time will come when people will recognise that they are worth more than the value of the paints used in the picture.

Portrait of Doctor Gachet, Portrait of Trabuc, Portrait of Dr Felix Rey, Portrait of Père Tanguy and Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin

I have walked this earth for thirty years, and out of gratitude, want to leave some souvenir.

One must work and dare if one really wants to live.