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Vincent Van Gogh

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Vincent Van Gogh is an artist who, during his life, could sell only one painting. Speaking of all the renowned artists, the most ill-fated and lamented is no one but a Dutch post-impressionist, Vincent Van Gogh, a genius artist that suffered from mental problems and encountered with disappointments. During his life time, his works were not recognized and appreciated until his death. Unfortunately, he never knew that, after he died, his paintings were sold at an astonishing price and valued a hundred million dollars. Some people said obstacles and difficulties in artists' life are inspiration to convey their feelings and express them through their works in order to make an outstanding masterpiece, like one of the most notable artist Vincent Van Gogh. Most of his masterpieces that were painted with vivid color, emotional impact and fantastical composition significantly inspired many artists to use painting as the way to illustrate their ideas and had hugely influenced the world fundamental of modernism.

Vincent Van Gogh was born in Groot-Zundert Holland.<sup>1</sup> He was an introvert and highly emotional child that grew up in a religious family. He was the oldest child in the family with two younger brothers and three younger sisters. Yet, the one that had the most closed intimacy to him was Theodorus or "Theo", his younger brother who was his best friend that always supported him financially and emotionally. Most

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "Vincent Van Gogh." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. 3 Sept. 2012. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent\\_van\\_Gogh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_van_Gogh)>

of his personal life sources are based from over 800 letters to his brother Theo that have been preserved and published.<sup>2</sup> The contents in the letters narrate many aspects in his personal life with full of the sadness and failures.

At the beginning of his life time, he worked as an art dealer in an art gallery Goupil & Cie in the Hague belonging to his uncle.<sup>3</sup> He was delighted to work in this business because of his love in art but he was unable to communicate with other people very well. Many customers were dissatisfied with his rude manners. Eventually, he was dismissed by his uncle. Then, he returned to England, diversely focusing on studying the Bible and extremely desiring to be a preacher. He was a temporary missionary and started preaching for the miners. Later, he became disappointed after he was disqualified by a committee of missionaries due to living in a squalid condition. To the sorrow Van Gogh had encountered, he described it in the letter to Theo and conveyed it through his drawing. Consequently, he realized that the best way for him to be characterized was by creating pictures. His life, as an artist, was then started.

Most of his paintings were initially dominated in a somber tone like one of the most famous paintings, The Potato Eaters. The Potato Eaters is an oil sketch on canvas that was painted while Van Gogh was in Nuenen, Netherland, and was showed in the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam.<sup>4</sup> In this painting, Van Gogh intended to depict the life of peasants and the different way of life between people in the society. Most of his paintings in this period were not colorful but earthy tones. As the result

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<sup>2</sup> Melissa McQuillan. VAN GOGH. 1997. P.14-16

<sup>3</sup> Melissa McQuillan. VAN GOGH. 1997. P.22-23

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "The Potato Eaters." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. 5 Sept. 2012. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Potato\\_Eaters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Potato_Eaters)>

his paintings were hardly sold. So, Theo who received letters from Van Gogh suggested him to use brighter color rather than the dark tone as this period was in the trend of Impressionism, which contained vibrant color and unique patterns style in the paintings.

Moving to Antwerp, he was introduced to Peter Paul Rubens's works and Japanese drawings which inspired him to change his style of paintings. He started to put more colorful in his painting and adopted new painting techniques. Pointillism was one of the techniques that he adopted by using small colored dots to create a picture on the canvas.<sup>5</sup> Self portrait was one of his paintings that used this technique which showed a theory of complementary colors to illustrate the contrast of colors between foreground and background that can depict on the painting. As in the modern art, this technique is widely used by many artists.

Yellow was Van Gogh's favorite color, he used it as a symbol of happiness which was evident in his most renowned painting, The Sunflowers. The Sunflowers was painted to express his intimate friendship with Paul Gauguin, an artist who Van Gogh hoped that he would join him to establish a school of art together. This painting had represented the most creative and colorful work of Van Gogh. It was created with thick brushstrokes known as Impasto. Impasto is the painting technique using thickly paint on the canvas and it will gives different textures appear on the canvas after finishing the painting.<sup>6</sup> Van Gogh used this technique for the expression and beauty. This contemporary impressionist style of The Sunflower influenced one of the famous

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<sup>5</sup> "Vincent Van Gogh." Van Gogh gallery. 10 Sept. 2012.  
<<http://www.vangoghgallery.com/misc/bio.html> >

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "Impasto." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. 10 Sept. 2012  
< <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impasto> >

artists, Vitali Komarov. His paintings are an interpretation of Van Gogh's work as he painted many pictures that almost imitate patterns and the painting style.<sup>7</sup>

Resulting from the friendship deterioration and a fear of desertion of Gauguin, Van Gogh was in an extreme emotional inconsistency. He was very stressed and finally reached the point at which depression detached him from the society and he consequently ended up with cutting off his left ear. He was hospitalized by Gauguin and immediately hospitalized. After returning home he was able to create his Self portrait in the mirror when his ear was capped by the bandage and a pipe in his mouth. Besides from thirty seven versions of Van Gogh's self portraits, people said that this version is an explicit representation of his emotion.<sup>8</sup> Many artists were once used the self portrait such as Leonardo da Vinci, Paolo Veronese or Pablo Picasso but Van Gogh was the one who is regarded as the prolific of self portraitist. The younger artists later used Van Gogh's style as a model of self portrait.

Despite suffering from illness during his treatment at Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, he could create another masterpiece, The Starry night. It is the depiction of the view of a starry night with cypresses outside his room.<sup>9</sup> He painted The Starry night in swirling shapes with impasto style. The tormented curves expressed his own restless agony. The painting was painted in a symbolic significance and intensified colors, which all supported Van Gogh's association with Symbolism. Symbolism is a technique that artists commonly have used in their paintings until today.

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<sup>7</sup> "Van Gogh's Impact on Art." Van Gogh gallery. 12 Sept. 2012.

<<http://www.vangoghgallery.com/misc/impact.html>>

<sup>8</sup> "Self-portraits." Van Gogh gallery. 12 Sept. 2012.

<<http://www.vangoghgallery.com/misc/selfportrait.html>>

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Ripley. "Vincent van Gogh." 1954. P.64

As an artist, the life of Vincent Van Gogh was sadly short after he shot himself with a gun at the age of 37. After all, his craziness and creative genius had created many valuable paintings. His paintings were easily recognizable and regarded as the twentieth-century cultural legend. His works were not only eminently famous, but also inspired many artists due to his painting style and creative modern techniques.