

# VAN GOGH

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COLOUR BY DOTS

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# Vincent Van Gogh

Throughout his life, Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) sought to overcome his inner turmoil through painting. Whilst his works are now among the most highly prized in the world, they were completely overlooked in his lifetime. The epitome of the tormented artist, this misunderstood genius and his experimental style and use of colour would leave a lasting impression on avant-garde painters to come.

The son of a Dutch pastor, he was named 'Vincent' after a brother who had been stillborn the previous year. Four years later, another brother, Theodorus, (1857-1891) arrived. Theo, as he was known to Vincent, would provide his brother with moral and financial support throughout his life.

A staunch admirer of Jean-François Millet, Van Gogh began by working on landscapes and pastoral scenes and, in 1882, on the advice of his cousin by marriage, Anton Mauve (1838-1888), turned to using oil paints.

In February 1886, Van Gogh followed his brother to Paris, where Theo put him up in a studio in Montmartre. Here Van Gogh mixed with Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist painters such as Camille Pissarro, Paul Gauguin and Paul Signac. After joining the studio of Cormon (1845-1924), he developed close ties with Émile Bernard and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, both of whom had a marked influence on his work.

It was his contact with Gauguin, along with the influence of Japanese woodblock prints, that led Van Gogh to hone his use of colour; his palette became brighter and more varied, his approach more fluid. His early studies focused on still lifes, landscapes and portraits (*Portrait of Père Tanguy*, 1887) but in order to take his work to the next level, he needed to see beyond Paris skies. And so he went in search of new horizons in Arles, where he moved in February 1888.

Dazzled by the light of the south of France, Van Gogh went on to make colour not just one component but the entire focus of his work. He aimed for the greatest possible intensity of both tone (such as the yellows in the 'Sunflowers' series) and colour combination (yellow/blue, yellow/green, blue/green, red/green): flowers, landscapes, domestic scenes and portraits became highly expressive.

Alone in Arles, his neighbours wary of what they saw as an eccentric outsider, Van Gogh sank into depression. However, he had not given up on his dream of building an artistic community and he eventually persuaded Gauguin to join him in Arles. When the master of Pont-Aven arrived in November 1888, he moved into the 'Yellow House' - his host's studio. But relations between the two men soon soured: Gauguin had difficulty coping with his friend's temperamental character and, on the night of 23 December 1888, after a particularly violent

quarrel, made up his mind to leave. Soon after Gauguin's departure, Van Gogh picked up a knife and cut off part of his left ear, which he later took to a prostitute. Two self-portraits bear witness to this act.

After being admitted to the asylum of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, where he would remain for a year (May 1889-May 1890), Van Gogh's style began to be characterized by long brushstrokes and twisted shapes, which betrayed the extent of his inner torment. Upon his release, he was driven out of Arles by the local people.

Physically and mentally debilitated, Van Gogh agreed to go to Auvers-sur-Oise, where Dr Paul Gachet lived. Not only a physician, but also an art lover and sometime painter himself, Gachet counted Paul Cézanne, Edouard Manet, Auguste Renoir and Edgar Degas among his friends. He had heard of Van Gogh's work through Theo and immediately recognized the significance of Vincent's art, as well as the extent of his illness. From then on, he encouraged Van Gogh to keep visiting him in Auvers-sur-Oise, drawing suspicions - unfounded at the time - of self-interest.

A true friendship was forged between the two men. Gachet succeeded in creating an atmosphere of trust, with positive effects on Van Gogh. The artist painted his first portrait of his benefactor, who was so thrilled he commissioned another. For perhaps the first time in his life, Van Gogh could see that

his talent had been recognized and his art understood by a man of distinction.

Van Gogh took up his brushes again, spending whole days at his easel and completing some of his major works: *The Church at Auvers* (1890), *Thatched Cottages at Cordeville* (1890) and *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890). Here, too, colour played an essential part. But this time, it was darker, the shapes more laboured, reflecting the painter's state of mind. His mental illness was his most severe affliction: 'There is something inside me, but what can it be?' he tried desperately to understand. After barely three months of benefiting from what help Gachet was able to give him, Van Gogh fell out with him too.

On 27 July 1890, Van Gogh went out for a walk and shot himself in the chest. In spite of Gachet's efforts to save him, he died two days later, passing away in almost total obscurity having signed his name on more than eight hundred canvases, but sold just one in his lifetime - *The Red Vineyard*, purchased in Brussels in 1890.

'People say - and I'm quite willing to believe it - that it's difficult to know oneself - but it's not easy to paint oneself either.'

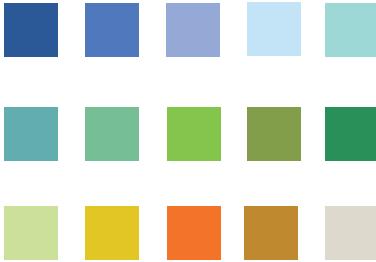
*Vincent Van Gogh in a letter to his brother Theo*



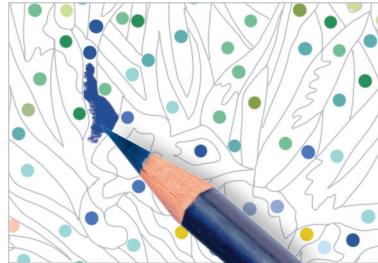


# Getting started

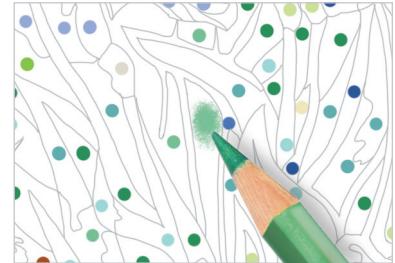
*Some colours have been slightly adapted in order to make the design easier to follow and the finished result better defined.*



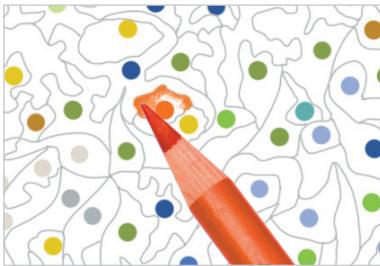
**1** Start by gathering all the colours used on the colouring page. Colouring pencils, felt-tip pens and paints all work well.



**2** Colour each section to match the dot within it.



**3** For a uniform effect when colouring large areas, work in several directions, using circular motions.



**4** Details show up best if you colour right to the edges of each section.

**5** If you don't have the right shade for a section, try layering multiple colours to achieve the desired effect. You can also replace a missing colour with another similar shade for a more personalized result.

