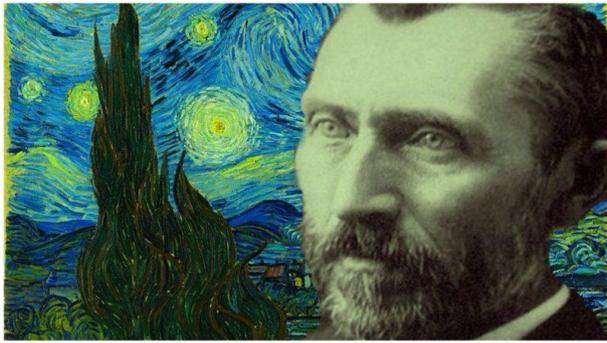


Biography of Vincent Van Gogh by Kim Magri



Vincent Willem van Gogh was born on March 30th, 1853 in Groot Zundert, the Netherlands. He was a Post-Impressionist painter who is among the most famous and influential figures in the history of Western art.

Vincent's father, Theodorus, was an austere country minister and his mother, Anna, was a moody artist whose love of nature, drawing and watercolours were transferred to her son. Van Gogh was born exactly one year after his parents' first son, also named Vincent, was stillborn. At a young age his name and birthdate already etched on his brother's headstone and he was melancholy. He was the eldest of 6 living children, two boys and three girls.

At age 15, van Gogh's family was struggling financially and he was forced to leave school and go to work. He got a job at his Uncle Cornelis' art dealership and by this time he was fluent in French, German, English and his native Dutch. In June of 1873, he worked in London for Goupil. Apart from falling in love with the English culture and some of its writers, here he fell in love with the landlady's daughter, Eugenie Loyer. When she rejected his marriage, van Gogh suffered a breakdown. His burning desire for human affection thwarted and he became increasingly solitary. He threw away all his books except for the Bible and devoted his life to God. He headed off to Paris and through the daily contact with works of art, his artistic sensibility was aroused.

Most of his artworks, about 2,100 to be precise, were made during the last decade of his life, also known as The Productive Decade. He worked hard and methodically but sought the guidance of more experienced artists at the beginning of his career. In 1888, he moved to Provence in southern France, where he painted his famous series 'Sunflowers'. He invited Gauguin to join him but they soon began to quarrel and one night he threatened the latter with a razor. Deeply remorseful, he then cut his a piece of his left ear, wrapped it in a newspaper and gave it to a prostitute. This was the first serious sign of the mental health problems that were to afflict him for the rest of his life. He spent time in psychiatric hospitals and swung between periods of inertia, depression and incredibly concentrated artistic activity, his work reflecting the intense colours and strong light of the countryside around him.

On the 27th of July, 1890 he shot himself in the stomach and died 2 days later at the young age of 37. His reported last words were "la tristesse durera toujours" which translates into "the sadness will last forever". He remained poor and virtually unknown throughout his life, but his legacy will live forever.