

NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Reminder: Norton Simon Museum Presents an Installation of Vincent van Gogh's
"Self-Portrait," 1889, on Loan from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

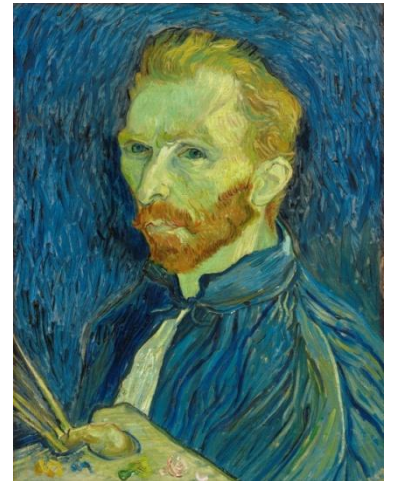
Dec. 7, 2012 – March 4, 2013

Members of the press: Please join us for a preview on Thursday, Dec. 6, at 6:00 p.m.

RSVP to media@nortonsimon.org or call (626) 844-6900.

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents an installation of Vincent van Gogh's electrifying "Self-Portrait" from 1889, a highlight of the National Gallery of Art's 19th-century collection. One of 36 self-portraits by Van Gogh, and among the last he painted, the work was executed as he recovered from a severe breakdown in Saint-Rémy in the summer of 1889. Its installation at the Norton Simon Museum is the first time the painting has been on view on the West Coast, and while Southern California is home to several outstanding works by Van Gogh, none of his self-portraits are in collections here. The loan is part of a special exchange program between the Norton Simon foundations and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., that brought Vermeer's "A Lady Writing" and Raphael's "Small Cowper Madonna" to the Simon in recent years.

Says Norton Simon Museum President Walter Timoshuk, "Van Gogh's artistic skill and creativity long captivated Mr. Simon, and he collected several of the artist's most impressive works. However, Mr. Simon was never able to purchase a self-portrait. This incredible loan from the National Gallery of Art gives us the opportunity to have such a work in our galleries for a few months, and allows our visitors a rare chance to view a Van Gogh self-portrait on the West Coast."



Self-Portrait, 1889
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853 – 1890)
Oil on canvas
57.2 x 43.8 cm (22 1/2 x 17 1/4 in.)
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney,
National Gallery of Art, Washington

Van Gogh's "Self-Portrait" will be installed in the Norton Simon Museum's 19th-century wing, near several of the Simon's own Van Gogh works, including "The Mulberry Tree," 1889, "Portrait of the Artist's Mother," 1888, and others. (The Simon's "Portrait of a Peasant [Patience Escalier]," also from 1888, is on view at The Frick Collection, New York, from Oct. 30, 2012 through Jan. 20, 2013.) A series of special events will be arranged in celebration of this special loan (see next page).

About Van Gogh's "Self-Portrait"

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890) is among the world's most beloved and admired artists, yet he was virtually unknown during his lifetime, and struggled with depression and mental illness. After voluntarily committing himself in May of 1889 to the mental asylum Saint-Paul-de-Mausole at Saint-Rémy, the tormented Van Gogh began the isolated and recuperative process of calming the delusions, paranoid panics and poor health that had plagued him for much of his adult life. Only six months before, he had quarreled with his dear friend Paul Gauguin in Arles and then severed part of his own ear in a fit of desperation and despair. The National Gallery of Art's jolting, poignant "Self-Portrait" is one of the last renditions of Van Gogh's penetrating interpretation of his own visage. Only three of his 36 self-portraits depict him as an artist, holding his palette and brushes. With his wounded ear turned away from the viewer, he confronts his own gaunt image, full of introspection and intensity. Unable at this point to confront other patients, or reality itself, he assumes the dual role of model and artist. By September 1889, after creating "Starry Night" (now at the Museum of Modern Art, New York) and painting the wheat fields that could be seen from his rooms at the asylum, he wrote to his brother Theo in Paris about two self-portraits he was painting:

So I am working on two portraits of myself at this moment—for want of another model—because it is more than time I did a little figure work. One I began the day I got up; I was thin and pale as a ghost. It is dark violet–blue and the head whitish with yellow hair, so it has a color effect.

The rapid, almost violent background strokes, painted thickly, shimmer in dissonance and contrast with the artist's deeply penetrating stare. Emerald highlights in his face, the blue of his smock, and the golden yellows of his hair and beard are all echoed on his palette—pigments that had only recently been ordered and sent as a care package from his brother. The rapidity and repetition of his linear movement belie the amount of forethought and precision that Van Gogh has applied to this composition; it is with utmost restraint that he circumscribes the nose with that bold green outline and calculates the effects of the brilliant yellows and blues.

He was known as the redheaded madman by locals, and yet he carefully composed hundreds of moving letters that demonstrated his love of nature, of man, of literature and language. In 10 short years, from 1880 to 1890, he painted almost unceasingly; more than 850 oil paintings are attributed to him today. One can only imagine his legacy, had he lived beyond his short 37 years.

Related Events

Lecture: *From Mirror to Canvas: Van Gogh's Processes of Self-Portrayal*

Judy Sund, Professor of Art History, The Graduate Center and Queens College, CUNY

Saturday, February 2, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Over the course of four years (1886–90), Vincent van Gogh, a committed portraitist, made about three dozen images of himself. Although each is grounded in what the artist saw as he regarded himself in the mirror, these works are not mere records of physical appearance, Judy Sund tells. Van Gogh's self-portraits also document processes of self-exploration and self-definition, and they give tangible form to some of the diverse personas the artist crafted (for sibling, parent, colleague, friend). Widely varied in palette and technique, as well as in props, costuming and backdrops, Van Gogh's self-portraits reveal shifts in his ambitions, enthusiasms, health and mental state, as well as the evolution of his style as he encountered the Parisian avant-garde and went on to forge his signature style in Arles and St.-Rémy.

Lecture: *"Dear Theo, Thank you for the paints": Van Gogh's Choice of Materials and Some Unforeseen Changes*

Ann Hoenigswald, Senior Conservator of Paintings, National Gallery of Art

Saturday, March 2, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Vincent van Gogh's extensive correspondence with his brother Theo offers remarkable insight into the artist's working technique and selection of materials. Not only did he request packages with specific paints and types of canvas supports, but he also described the brushes he used, his preferences for certain frames and the intended presentation of his pictures. Van Gogh was keenly aware of the quality of artists' materials, and he discussed the potential advantages and disadvantages of one color over another. Ann Hoenigswald examines these choices and how they affect the appearance of Van Gogh's paintings today.

Film: *Lust for Life* (1956)

Friday, January 4, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

In this award-winning film directed by Vincente Minnelli, actor Kirk Douglas offers a fierce portrayal of tortured artist Vincent van Gogh. With his obsession for painting and his emotional torment, Van Gogh drives away his family and friends, including artist Paul Gauguin (played by Anthony Quinn, who won the 1957

Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor). Beautifully shot to capture the hues of Van Gogh's sea, field and sky, *Lust for Life* explores the ecstasy of art, and the agony of one man's short life. 122 min/Not Rated.

Open House: *Van Gogh Night*

Friday, February 1, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Join us for a free evening looking at one of the world's most recognizable artists. Three talks explore Van Gogh's influences, work and impact. The evening begins with an overview of art from Manet to Van Gogh, followed by Chief Curator Carol Togneri's introduction to Van Gogh's works in the Norton Simon Museum collections and the loan from the National Gallery of Art. The evening ends with a discussion that examines Van Gogh's influence on expressionism and the art of the 20th century. Offered concurrently with the gallery talks are art-making activities for artists of all ages to create original works. Admission to the Museum and all programs are free. Space for the first and final talks is limited to 25 participants. Please sign up at the Information Desk no later than 15 minutes prior to each session.

Afternoon Salon: *Vincent van Gogh*

Sunday, February 10, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

The Norton Simon Museum's collection of works by Van Gogh includes landscapes ranging from Holland to Provence, portraits of the artist's mother and the peasant Patience Escalier, and, on loan from the National Gallery of Art, one of the artist's last self-portraits. Consider the artist's unique style and personal history in this in-depth conversation about one of the modern era's most influential artists.

Spotlight Talks (20-minutes): Saturdays, December 15, January 5, March 2, 1:30 & 2:30 p.m.

Guided Tour (60-minutes): Friday, March 1, 6:00–7:00 p.m. and 7:00–8:00 p.m.

Stories in the Afternoon: *Vincent van Gogh* (60-minute in-gallery program for children)

Sunday, February 3, 2:00–3:00 p.m. and Sunday, February 24, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

Vincent van Gogh is celebrated for his expressive colors and swirling brushstrokes. Learn about the artist's life and the people he painted, then use bright colors to make a dynamic landscape inspired by his works.

Teen Arts Academy: *Impressions of Van Gogh*

Saturday, February 16, 1:00–4:00 p.m. and Sunday, February 17, 1:00–4:00 p.m.

Artist Albert Valdez leads a two-day workshop exploring the life and work of Vincent van Gogh, selecting pieces from the Norton Simon's permanent collections and a loan from the National Gallery of Art in

Washington, D.C. Influenced by the Impressionists, Van Gogh developed a distinct painting style. He used color and texture to capture the world around him while still expressing his inner self. After discussing the work in the galleries, students head to the studio and paint in the spirit of Van Gogh by experimenting with color and texture. The two-day course is free, and space is limited to 18 participants. All materials are provided. Advance registration is required and can be made at nortonsimon.org/education/teens.

About the Art Exchange Program

In 2007, the Norton Simon foundations entered a new phase in their history by forming an art exchange program with both the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and The Frick Collection in New York City. Works of art from the Norton Simon foundations are lent to both of these estimable institutions for special viewings and, in return, masterpieces from their collections make their way to the Norton Simon Museum. The exchange is an opportunity to promote the Norton Simon collections to a much wider audience while simultaneously providing Southern California audiences the chance to view some of the world's most significant and visually compelling paintings.

Loans to the National Gallery of Art have included Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Boy," 1655–60 (lent in 2007), Manet's "The Ragpicker," c. 1865–70 (2009), and Renoir's "The Pont des Arts, Paris," 1867–68 (2012). Loans to The Frick Collection have included Jacopo Bassano's "Flight into Egypt," c. 1544–45, Peter Paul Rubens' "Holy Women at the Sepulchre," c. 1611–14, Guercino's "Aldrovandi Dog," c. 1625, Francisco de Zurbarán's "Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose," 1633, and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's "Birth of St. John the Baptist," c. 1655, which were installed in a special presentation titled *Masterpieces of European Art from the Norton Simon Museum* (2009). As mentioned, Van Gogh's "Portrait of a Peasant (Patience Escalier)," 1888, is on view at The Frick Collection in fall 2012.

Loans to the Norton Simon Museum have included Johannes Vermeer's "A Lady Writing," c. 1665 (2008) and Raphael's "The Small Cowper Madonna," c. 1505 (2010) from the National Gallery of Art, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' "Comtesse d'Haussonville," dated 1845 (2009) and Memling's "Portrait of a Man," c. 1470–75 (2012) from The Frick Collection.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United

States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open from noon to 6 p.m. every day except Tuesday and noon to 9 p.m. on Friday.

Admission: General admission is \$10 for adults and \$7 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6 to 9 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.