



## Press Release

Auvers-sur-Oise, 28 July 2021

### **VAN GOGH'S LAST PAINTING: AN END TO THE MYSTERY**

Today, the Institut Van Gogh has the pleasure to reveal to the public a recently uncovered historical photograph that confirms the discovery of the exact location where Van Gogh painted his last work a few hours before his suicide. For researchers and Van Gogh enthusiasts, a 131-year-old mystery has been solved.

This new discovery, the more remarkable for arising from an inverted or mirror image photograph, means that the Institut Van Gogh and the Van Gogh Museum can now affirm with absolute certainty that the location where Van Gogh painted his last work has been identified. The angle of the photograph is very close to the one chosen by the painter and certain elements not found on the post card can clearly be seen on the recently uncovered image.

Tomorrow, on 29 July 2021, for the 131<sup>st</sup> anniversary of his death, the artist's great grandnephew and namesake will visit the cemetery of Auvers-sur-Oise to pay tribute to his famous relatives. Accompanied by Emilie Gordenker, director of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, and Barbara Vroom, president of the Van Gogh Foundation, he will lay a wreath of sunflowers on the brothers' adjoining graves.



## Van Gogh's Tree Roots: a discovery of global significance

On 28 July 2020, the **Institut Van Gogh** was proud to partner with the painter's great grandnephew, Vincent Willem van Gogh, and Emilie Gordenker, the director of the **Van Gogh Museum** in Amsterdam, to inaugurate the site on Rue Daubigny, Auvers-sur-Oise, where Van Gogh painted his last work.



D. Janssens invites Vincent Willem van Gogh to inaugurate the site of Tree Roots, with Emilie Gordenker to the left (© Maxime Stange).

The public unveiling of the site was the result of a major discovery made by Dr Wouter van der Veen about the painter's last days. The breakthrough, sparked by an old photo post card (1910 – 1920), made news headlines around the world. Although highly credible, the identification of the site was not presented as definitive due to the angle from which the photograph was taken and the possible existence of a similar location.



Colour version of the post card which led to the identification of Van Gogh's last subject (©Laurent Bourcellier)

## From probability to certainty

In May 2021, Thomas Reveau - an attentive reader of the *Pontoise Museum* blog run by Fabrice Dassé (<https://www.lacaverneduyeti.fr/pontoise-museum/>) - noticed similarities between the post card presented by the Institut Van Gogh in 2020 and a glass plate photograph taken in around 1907 depicting a roadside scene.



Screenshot of the *Pontoise Museum* website (©Fabrice Dassé)

This new discovery, the more remarkable for arising from an inverted or mirror image photograph, means that the Institut Van Gogh can now affirm with **absolute certainty** that the location where Van Gogh painted his last work has been identified. The angle of the photograph is very close to the one chosen by the painter and certain elements not found on the post card can clearly be seen on the recently uncovered image.

The confirmation of the site is also of historical significance, as it has implications for Van Gogh's suicide and further undermines the unfounded theory that the painter was murdered by teenagers. The free e-book ([www.arthenon.com](http://www.arthenon.com)) recounting the history of the discovery has been updated to reflect this exciting new development.

Dr Wouter van der Veen, scientific director of the Institut Van Gogh and president of Boussod, Valadon et Cie states: « *I was extremely moved to learn of the photograph discovered by Thomas Reveau on the Pontoise Museum blog run by Fabrice Dassé, an amateur historian. This incredible chain of discovery has provided certainty about the last moments of Van Gogh's life. How fitting to the spirit of Vincent's work that a simple act of observation has led to a profound insight.* »

« *The newly discovered photograph unequivocally shows the site of Van Gogh's last painting Tree roots: better than the postcard it gives an idea of the sheer size of these fairy-tale roots and trunks, whose whimsical shapes clearly attracted the eyes and mind of Van Gogh.* », Teio Meedendorp.



Wouter van der Veen presents his discovery to the press, watched by Teio Meedendorp (©Maxime Strange)

## Vincent Willem van Gogh and Emilie Gordenker return to Auvers-sur-Oise



Vincent Willem van Gogh and Emilie Gordenker at the graves of Vincent and Theo in 2020.

On the 131<sup>st</sup> anniversary of his death, the artist's great grandnephew and namesake will visit the cemetery of Auvers-sur-Oise on 29 July 2021 to pay tribute to his famous relatives. Accompanied by Emilie Gordenker, director of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, and Barbara Vroom, president of the Van Gogh Foundation, he will lay a wreath of sunflowers on the brothers' adjoining graves.

The day before, on 28 July, the Institut Van Gogh and the historic gallery Boussod, Valadon et Cie will present to them a special print of the photograph confirming the exact location where Van Gogh's brush last touched the canvas.

Please note: for administrative reasons unclear to the Institut Van Gogh, the *Tree Roots* site on Rue Daubigny is still (!) not accessible to the public. For more information:

- Auvers-sur-Oise council <http://ville-auverssuroise.fr/>
- The site <http://www.vangoghroots.com/en/tree-roots-the-last-painting-by-van-gogh.php>

Lovers of his work can however admire Van Gogh's last painting at the eponymous museum in Amsterdam (The Netherlands): <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0195V1962>



The photo confirming the discovery (circa 1907)



*Tree Roots* (27 July 1890), the last work by Van Gogh, painted on the day of his suicide.

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