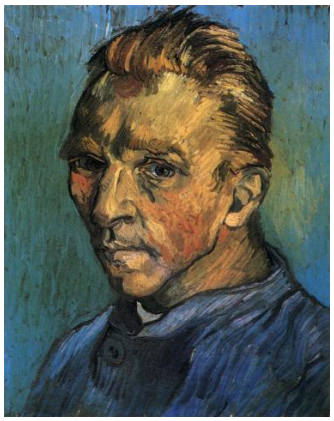
AWESOME stories

VINCENT COMMITS SUICIDE



0. VINCENT COMMITS SUICIDE - Story Preface

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This image depicts one of the last-known paintings which Vincent created of himself. Still living in Saint-Rémy, at the time he produced this in September of 1889, Vincent did not have his characteristic beard. This oil-on-canvas, which measures 40 x 31 cm, is part of a private collection. Click on the image for a better view.

No one is really sure what happened when Vincent set out for his walk on the 27th of July. It appears that he had his easel and painting supplies with him. But he also had a revolver.

Shooting himself in the chest, Vincent somehow managed to get back to his room at the Ravoux Inn. Monsieur Ravoux found him and called for help. Both Dr. Gachet and Dr. Mazery (a local physician) thought it best not to remove the bullet. Gachet sent an urgent message to Theo who arrived the next afternoon.

The situation was hopeless, as Theo noted in a letter to his mother on August 1, 1890:

> *Dr. Gachet and the other doctor were exemplary and have looked after him well, but they realized from the first moment that there was nothing one could do.*

Theo remained with van Gogh, speaking to him in Dutch. As his brother gently held him, Vincent said:

> *I would like to go like this.*

In an August 5th letter to his sister Elizabeth, Theo describes the last moments of Vincent's life:

> *He himself wanted to die, when I sat at his bedside and said that we would try to get him better and that we hoped that he would then be spared this kind of despair, he said, 'La tristesse durera toujours'* [the sadness will last forever]*. I understood what he wanted to say with those words.*
>
> *A few moments later he felt suffocated and within one minute he closed his eyes. A great rest came over him from which he did not come to life again.*

It was 1:30 a.m. on the 29th of July, 1890. Vincent was thirty-seven years old.

A problem developed over funeral arrangements. Because van Gogh had committed suicide, the Catholic Church in Auvers refused burial in its cemetery. Officials in Méry, a nearby township, permitted interment there, and Vincent's funeral took place on the 30th of July.

Vincent's long time friend, the painter Emile Bernard, described the details of van Gogh's suicide in his long letter to Albert Aurier. The following excerpt sets the scene:

On Sunday evening he went out into the countryside near Auvers, placed his easel against a haystack and went behind the chateau and fired a revolver shot at himself. Under the violence of the impact (the bullet entered his body below the heart) *he fell, but he got up again, and fell three times more, before he got back to the inn where he was staying* (Ravoux, place de la Mairie) *without telling anyone about his injury.*

He finally died on Monday evening, still smoking his pipe which he refused to let go of, explaining that his suicide had been absolutely deliberate and that he had done it in complete lucidity. A typical detail that I was told about his wish to die was that when Dr. Gachet told him that he still hoped to save his life, he said, 'Then I'll have to do it over again.' But, alas, it was no longer possible to save him. . .

Bernard arrived on the 30th of July, too late to see his friend one last time.

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Media Stream



View from the Ravoux Inn
Photo by John Kolter, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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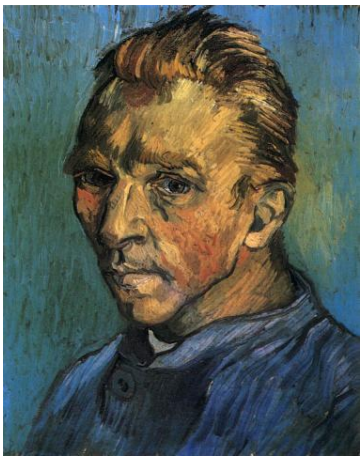
Albert Aurier - van Gogh Admirer

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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