

MANAGEMENT 

Sponsored by:

LEADERS & SUCCESS

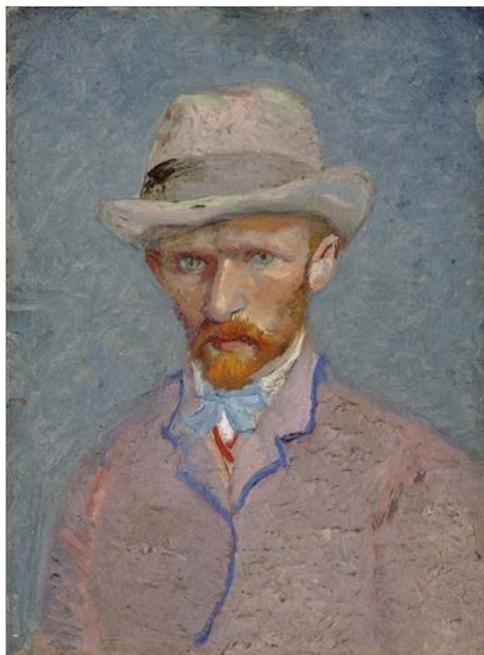
Vincent Van Gogh Shine

By MARY O'NEILL, FOR INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Posted 09/26/2011 02:15 PM ET

 [Email](#)  [Print](#)  [Comment](#)

 [Tweet](#)  [in](#)



Van Gogh taught himself how to paint, then moved to Paris in 1886 and mastered his colorful flair. AP [View Enlarged Image](#)

No other artist has such celebrity.

Fans have slept outside to score tickets to his shows.

His paint tubes were exhibited in a French gallery, like a sacred relic.

Hollywood movies, a best-selling novel, operas, comic books, a top 40 hit — more than a century after his death, the fervor continues.

That Vincent van Gogh pined for recognition, for understanding, even as it stubbornly eluded him, only fuels the public sympathy.

The tabloid-esque biography is now well known: He cut off part of his ear, he sold only one painting, he had episodes of madness.

All true. The danger, however, in picking over van Gogh's psyche is that we may overlook the astonishing achievements — technical and intellectual — in his art.

Ahead With Hues

Van Gogh (1853-90) was the forerunner par excellence of modernism. He had a feel for color unmatched by any other painter — 89 shades of yellow in one farm scene — and he used that touch for a radically new purpose.

By the late 19th century, a new purpose was necessary. Technology threatened: Why use a painter when a camera could now capture a scene or likeness?

Social changes also threatened: The French and Industrial Revolutions had made traditional subjects outmoded. Why

Van Gogh's Keys

Produced over 900 paintings in a 10-year career and profoundly influenced modern art; his art ranks among the most expensive

Hi, M [My IBD](#) [Sign Out](#)

My Routine [Modify](#)

The Big Picture	Markets Update
Stocks On The Move	IBD 50
eIBD	Online Courses
Stock Checkup	IBD TV
Screen Center	Daily Stock Analysis

[My Biggest Price Movers](#) [My Stock Lists](#)

Investing Tip

Some stocks offer two chances to buy.



Most Popular

Most Viewed

All | [Articles](#) | [Media](#)

-  [Obama Loss Would Put U.S. Back On The Reagan...](#)
-  [The Terrifying Line in Obama's Speech That E...](#)
-  [Ann Romney And Chris Christie Land A One-Two...](#)

paint mythology and aristocrats when scientific discoveries and a middle class were on the rise?

The Parisian avant-garde had tackled these issues — wresting the art market away from a government-mandated stuffiness — but it was van Gogh's idiosyncratic vision that endured and proved key to the future of art.

Leo Jansen, director of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, told IBD: "He was a very radical man. He couldn't follow theory — systems, rules, everything fixed. He found his own solutions, with enormous awareness. After van Gogh, painters could feel free to do anything. It's open, liberating."

paintings sold at auction.

"If something in you says 'you aren't a painter' — it's then that you should paint, and that voice will be silenced."

Six Enormous Stakes In Presidential Election

Stocks Bounce Higher As Leaders Attract Fast...

11/02/2012 09:00:26 PM ET

Van Gogh's innovation was simply to express himself, to paint what he saw, but through the filter of his emotions. Centuries-old techniques — "hopelessly dry," he called them — were overruled by his instincts, the new arbiter of worth.

How much of his interior life — his compassion, curiosity, intelligence, desires — could he communicate on the canvas? Van Gogh made that, not correct proportions, the modern measure.

"I ask you, what sort of a man, what sort of a visionary observer or thinker, what sort of a human character is there behind some of these canvases praised for their technique ... impeccable — without faults — (but) without giving us anything new to discover ... (while) in many paintings by virtually unknown people one feels that they were made with a will, with emotion, with passion, with love."



Van Gogh came out with "Starry Night" in 1889. AP [View Enlarged Image](#)

So says the best commentator on van Gogh's art: the artist himself. His hundreds of letters serve as a literary backdrop to his paintings and as a primer on his approach.

Though forward-thinking, that approach was forged far from the cutting edge. Born in the Dutch village of Zundert, he tumbled into painting only after failing as an art dealer and a minister, his father's profession. At age 27, late off the mark and with little formal training,

van Gogh made his first awkward attempts to transcribe his vision onto canvas. "He was drawn to art not as a skill or means of livelihood, but as a communication of the good," wrote Meyer Schapiro in his monograph "Van Gogh."

Self-Made

Instead of the standard apprenticeship, he honed his skill on enthusiasm, a keen work ethic and a prodigious intellect. He commented on no less than 1,200 works of art in his correspondence, in Dutch, French and English, and once completed 70 paintings in 70 days. "Van Gogh was one of the most analytical, deliberate, best-read artists ever," said Charles Moffett, vice chairman of Impressionist & Modern Art at Sotheby's. "He read books and journals in multiple languages. He lived on ideas and information."

Five years of practice led to his first masterpiece, "The Potato Eaters," in 1885.

The scene, of a farming family at dinner, illustrates an abiding credo of van Gogh's art:

closeness to nature. Simple people, the cycles of life and the seasons are paramount.

Nature, irradiated by his brush, could be a solace for the overindustrialized viewer. He made a pair of boots seem lit from within, and even his portraits have "an outdoor quality," according to Schapiro.

On To France

A move to Paris in 1886 ignited van Gogh's style, combining his devotion to nature with an explosion of color. Little acquainted with Impressionism and successive styles, he was gobsmacked on arrival. He quickly modified his darker Dutch palette and worked to assimilate the Parisian aesthetic.

"He mastered it within one year: that color carries the meaning of a painting," said Jansen. "He was painting from reality, but color holds the effect. 'The Bedroom' gives a sense of absolute rest — not because of the bed, but because of the colors. It's the color that does it."



"The Bedroom' gives a sense of absolute rest — not because of the bed, but because of the colors. It's the color that does it," said Leo... [View Enlarged Image](#)

Though emotionally charged, van Gogh's work is concentrated and methodical, anything but slapdash, as it was first received. He explained to his brother Theo: "I'm in the middle of a complicated calculation that results in canvases done quickly one after another, but calculated long beforehand. And look, when people say they're done too quickly, you'll be able to reply that they looked at them too quickly."

Buoyed by contact with other artists, van Gogh also felt validated by his discovery of Japanese art. Here was an established tradition that mirrored his taste for flattened, patterned planes of vibrant color.

In 1888 an optimistic van Gogh moved from Paris to Arles, in the south of France, to set up a "studio of the south." It was to be a magnet for innovators and a paean to the Japanese. In Arles, he created 200 paintings and 100 drawings and watercolors in a little more than a year. Nocturnal scenes by candlelight, fruit blossoms while on his back, sketches during windstorms — he mixed hot orange with icy aquamarine, vivid violet with his signature yellow, all to harmonious effect. "There are colors that make each other shine, that make a couple, that complete each other like man and woman," he wrote.

Though revving his creativity in Arles, van Gogh also suffered an attack of mental illness there. His attempts to manage the frightening episodes drove him to an institution. He nevertheless painted each day that his health would allow.

"Starry Night," where all the elements of nature — earth, air, fire and water — seem to surge together, was painted during his hospitalization and demonstrates that van Gogh's mastery of his craft only increased in his final years.

After a move north to Auvers-sur-Oise to continue treatment under a Dr. Gachet ("he is sicker than I am," the artist observed), van Gogh committed suicide in July 1890. He was 37. One hundred years later, his portrait of that doctor sold at auction for a then-record price of \$82.5 million.

Bright Worth

That value — his paintings are consistently among the most expensive sold on the market — is due to the freshness and vitality that never fade from van Gogh's work.

"There's a universally visceral character to his paintings," said Moffett. "People want to touch, to put their fingers on the texture of the paint. His work has an ever-increasing appeal. It never gets boring."

Van Gogh's work is so forceful, it even exceeds the hype that surrounds it, especially when viewed in person. "Whether I've actually sung a lullaby with color I leave to the critics," he wrote.

The critics now see that he had, but — more important to van Gogh — the public sees it as well.

[Email](#) [Print](#) [Comment](#)



Sponsored Links

[Planning for Retirement?](#)

\$500,000 portfolio? Download the guide by Forbes Columnist Ken Fisher's firm. www.FisherInvestments.com

[Planning for Retirement?](#)

\$500,000 portfolio? Download the guide by Forbes Columnist Ken Fisher's firm. www.FisherInvestments.com

[Planning for Retirement?](#)

\$500,000 portfolio? Download the guide by Forbes Columnist Ken Fisher's firm. www.FisherInvestments.com

See Also

- [Top Venture Capitalist Bill Draper Focuses On People](#) 02:13 PM ET
- [Web Retailers And Publishers Get Help For Sure Growth](#) 02:13 PM ET
- [William Randolph Hearst Sparked A Media Empire](#) 11/01/2012 01:58 PM ET
- [Manage Assets Wisely To Survive, Thrive In Business](#) 11/01/2012 01:58 PM ET
- [Fundraising, Marketing Skills Crucial For Success](#) 10/31/2012 02:07 PM ET

Comments ()

Research	News	Editorials	IBD University	IBD TV	eIBD	Leaderboard	Store
IBD Charts	Investing	Andrew Malcolm	Online Courses				
MarketSmith	Business	Cartoons	Workshops				
Stock Checkup	Economy	Capital Hill Blog	Homestudy				
Screen Center	Technology	On The Left	Forums				
Options Center	Management	On The Right	Meetups				
ETF Center	Politics	Viewpoint	Events				
IBD Indexes	Special Reports	Perspective	Ask IBD				
	Click Tech Blog	Polls	Financial Dictionary				
	Economic Calendar		Educational Videos				

Get Quote Search Site

GET eIBD AND START USING THE #1 INVESTING STRATEGY

[GET IT NOW!](#)

[Home](#) | [About IBD](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Classifieds & Partner Offers](#) | [Retail Locations](#) | [IBD Editorials](#) | [CAN SLIM Advisors](#)

INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Notice: Information contained herein is not and should not be construed as an offer, solicitation, or recommendation to buy or sell securities. The information has been obtained from sources we believe to be reliable; however no guarantee is made or implied with respect to its accuracy, timeliness, or completeness. The information and content are subject to change without notice. You may use IBD's Services and Subscriber-Only features solely for personal, non-commercial use. Removal or alteration of any trademark, copyright or other notices will result in legal action taken to protect our rights. You may not distribute IBD's Services or Subscriber-Only features to others, whether or not for payment or other consideration, and you may not modify, copy, frame, reproduce, sell, publish, transmit, display or otherwise use or revise any portion of IBD's Services or Subscriber-Only features. For information regarding use of IBD's Services for any purpose, please see our [Terms and Conditions of Use](#). © 2000-2012 Investor's Business Daily, Inc. All rights reserved. Investor's Business Daily, IBD, CAN SLIM and corresponding logos are registered trademarks of Investor's Business Daily, Inc. [Copyright and Trademark Notice](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)

WILLIAM O'NEIL + CO.

© 2012 William O'Neil + Co. Incorporated. All Rights Reserved. The William O'Neil + Co. Database and all data contained herein are provided by William O'Neil + Co. Incorporated and are used by IBD under license agreement. Daily Graphs and Daily Graphs Online are trademarks of William O'Neil + Co. Incorporated or its subsidiaries.

MARKETSMITH

© 2012 MarketSmith, Incorporated. Charts provided by MarketSmith are used by IBD under license agreement. MarketSmith is a registered trademark of MarketSmith, Incorporated.