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Van Gogh's "Green Wheat Fields, Auvers" from Paul Mellon Enters Collection of National Gallery of Art, Goes on View in West Building on December 20, 2013



Vincent van Gogh, *Green Wheat Fields, Auvers*, 1890

Oil on canvas. 28 3/4 x 36 5/8 inches (73 x 93 cm)

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

Washington, DC—Vincent van Gogh's powerful and intense *Green Wheat Fields, Auvers* (1890), likely painted just weeks before the artist ended his life, goes on view in the National Gallery of Art's West Building, Gallery M-83, beginning December 20. The painting was bequeathed to the Gallery by renowned philanthropist, art collector, and founding Gallery benefactor Paul Mellon (1907–1999), subject to a life estate in his wife, Rachel Lambert Mellon, which gave her the right to possess the work for her lifetime. She has now relinquished the remainder of her life estate, allowing the Gallery to take immediate possession of the work.

"*Green Wheat Fields, Auvers* is a marvelous complement to the Gallery's Van Gogh collection and represents his wildly prolific late Auvers period," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "Thanks to the generosity of important benefactors such as Paul Mellon, Ailsa Mellon Bruce, Chester Dale, Pamela Harriman, and John Hay Whitney, we now have nine outstanding paintings by this master, of which six are already on view in Washington." (The Gallery owns 11 prints and drawings by Van Gogh that may be seen by appointment by calling 202-842-6380.)

Measuring 283/4 x 36 5/8 inches (73 x 93 cm) *Green Wheat Fields, Auvers* was likely painted in Auvers-sur-Oise, France, during the spring/early summer of 1890, following Van Gogh's voluntary confinement at the asylum of Saint-Rémy. In this village just north of Paris, and as he did before in the countryside surrounding Arles and Saint-Rémy, Van Gogh painted what could be called "pure landscapes," in addition to the Auvers Romanesque church, town hall, and picturesque thatched-roof houses.

In this painting, Van Gogh eliminates the rural figures, stony walls, wooden carts, dramatic trees, and rustic buildings that populate so many of his landscapes and focuses instead on the

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windblown clouds and tall grasses. Two-thirds of the composition consists of the field in a rich range of greens and blues, punctuated by outbursts of yellow flowers. The artist wrote of his return to northern France as a kind of homecoming, a peaceful restoration in which the vibrant, hot colors of the south were replaced by cool, gentle hues in green and blue. Van Gogh's energetic strokes describe the movement of grassy stalks in the breeze, their patterned undulations creating a woven integral form anchored at the right by a juncture point between field, road, and sky.

"Because there is so little to read in the composition, the focus is on the color but even more so on brushwork—the clouds whipping around in spinning circles, opening out and closing in, Van Gogh's brush squiggling across the surface in long calligraphic strokes. The paint is applied in thick impasto, creating the marvelous textured surface of Van Gogh's best loved paintings. Through his dynamic touch and vivid, unmediated color, Van Gogh expresses the intense freshness of this slice of countryside," said Mary Morton, curator, French paintings, National Gallery of Art.

Green Wheat Fields, Auvers will hang in a gallery with other Van Gogh works: **Girl in White** (1890), also from Auvers, **La Mousmé** (1888), **The Olive Orchard** (1889), **Roses** (1890), and **Self Portrait** (1889). **Field with Green Wheat** relates strongly to three of the Gallery's pen and ink drawings by Van Gogh, all from 1888—**Harvest—The Plain of La Crau**, **Harvest**, and **Ploughman in the Fields near Arles**—in the rhythmic weave of the marks made to describe the artist's connection to nature's unifying energy.

The painting spent its early life first in Van Gogh's brother Theo's holdings, then in Germany, represented as early as 1905 by the brilliant modern art dealer Paul Cassirer, and sold in 1906 to Curt Herrmann in Berlin. His son, Frederick (Fritz) Herrmann, sold it through the Carstairs Gallery, New York, to Paul Mellon in December 1955. It has remained in the Mellons' home in Upperville, VA, until now, with the exception of an exhibition devoted to their collection and that of Paul's sister Ailsa Mellon Bruce at the National Gallery of Art in 1966.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/modern-art-during-renovation.html>.

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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