

VAN GOGH EXPERTS



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1-646-798-8401

info@vangoghexperts.com

33 West 19th Street, 4th floor

New York, NY 10011, U.S.A.

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS



FIGURE 1 THE SUBJECT WORK

7/25/2019

Study of a painting

1-646-798-8401

info@vangoghexperts.com

33 West 19th Street, 4th floor

New York, NY 10011, U.S.A.

PREPARED FOR MR. IVAN HERNANDEZ
BY THE ART RESEARCH DEPARTMENT AT VAN GOGH
EXPERTS.

PRÉCIS

SCOPE OF WORK To determine whether the subject work is by or after Vincent Willem van Gogh (*b* Zundert, Netherlands, March 30, 1853; *d* Auvers-sur-Oise, France, July 29, 1890); with additions or collaboration with Henri-Marie-Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec Montfa (*b* Albi, Tarn, France, Nov 24, 1864; *d* Château de Malromé, near Langon, Gironde, France, Sept 9, 1901).

DESCRIPTION Oil on canvas, 73 x 100 centimeters, showing a flower market scene. No signature is perceptible on the recto side.

PROVENANCE KNOWN TO CLIENT According to notes provided to Van Gogh Experts, the client purchased the painting from a now-closed art gallery in Caracas, Venezuela.

Statement of Findings

STUDY OF A PAINTING

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Vincent van Gogh produced nearly 900 paintings and more than a thousand works on paper in his career, despite his serious practice of art comprising only a decade or so of his life, between the ages of 27 until his early death at age 37 in 1890.

Most members of van Gogh's family were sorted into two camps: clergymen or art dealers. In the course of his lifetime, van Gogh tried and failed at both. Initially van Gogh apprenticed with the firm of Goupil & Co., which had branches at the Hague, London and in Paris. However, soon after van Gogh was transferred to the Paris office of Goupil, he began to develop a religious fervor that made him unsuitable to the art trade and led to his dismissal. Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo, which are a singularly rich resource of information about the artist, describe a crisis of spirit subsequent to lack of success as a lay preacher among the miners of Belgium that led him to dedicate himself to painting scenes of peasant life in rural areas, such as those of Jean Breton and Jean-François Millet. But first, van Gogh declared, he needed to dedicate himself to learning the craft of painting better. Theo, himself an art dealer, supported van Gogh both financially and emotionally for the rest of his life, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the artist's needs.

At the end of February of 1886 van Gogh arrived at Theo's flat in the Rue Laval in Paris, and by March he was studying with Fernand Cormon. Other students in Cormon's studio at the time included the Australian John Peter Russell, Emile Bernard, Louis Anquetin and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Less than two years later, van Gogh moved south to Arles, sharing quarters with fellow post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin at the Yellow House.

During this time, van Gogh's mental health, always delicate, began to decline dramatically, the notorious incident in which he cut off part of his own ear being only one example of its manifestation. Despite being institutionalized for a year at Saint-Rémy, van Gogh remained prolific, painting at least 150 pictures during the year of his stay in the asylum there, including *Starry Night* (1889). This prodigious level of output continued nearly to the very end of his life, which was cut short due to a gunshot wound to his chest in late July of 1890. This has been commonly discussed as a self-inflicted injury, but in the last several decades, research and scholarship on the subject of van Gogh have reconsidered both this fatal wound as well as the ear mutilation that occurred in December of 1888. It is possible we will never know the true facts surrounding the artist's death, but it is certain that nearly all viewers experience van Gogh's late work as some of the most emotionally moving canvases of the artist's career, indeed some of the most powerful of the late 19th century itself in Western art.

Notes provided to Van Gogh Experts indicated that art consultant Janet Gwendolyn Smith suggested the subject work might have been the product of collaboration with Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Consequently, the Art Research Department examined Toulouse-Lautrec's biography as well in order to ascertain when the two artists may have met.

Henri-Marie-Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec Montfa was born to the Comte and Comtesse de Toulouse-Lautrec, members of the French aristocracy who were in fact first cousins. This degree of consanguinity may have produced the genetic defect that led to the artist's crippling afflictions and early death, for as van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec died in his late thirties. Owing to his frequent illnesses, he was chiefly educated at home and showed artistic prowess even in childhood. By 1882, he had convinced his parents to allow him to study art in Paris, beginning first in the studio of Leon Bonnat and then with Fernand Cormon, where he encountered van Gogh among the students there.

Lautrec went on to establish his own studio in Montmartre, which became known as a haven for artists, bohemians and members of the Paris demimonde in the late 19th century, particularly in its nightclubs such as the Moulin Rouge and the Chat Noir. Though he spent considerable time in the south of France for his health - evidently he particularly enjoyed swimming, as it no doubt provided some relief for his terrible joint and bone pain - the subject matter of his work reflects his milieu: singers, can-can dancers, prostitutes, denizens of Paris' soft underbelly. His work received early acclaim and despite his being perpetually short of money, it was not for lack of success, for Lautrec sold drawings to magazines and newspapers and frequently illustrated popular song sheets, menu cards, and books. He sold paintings through art dealers as well, including the firm run by van Gogh's brother Theo.

Years of hard living combined with his genetic affliction took a serious toll on Lautrec, and he suffered a stroke while on holiday at Arcachon in southwestern France. He died in his mother's home shortly before his 37th birthday.

VISUAL EXAMINATION

The subject work submitted for examination is a scene of a flower market by the water's edge, featuring flower sellers wearing the traditional men's and women's Dutch costume from Noord-Holland, the province of North Holland in the Netherlands, where Amsterdam is located. The women wear peaked lace caps with wings turned back over the ears, long skirts, and white blouses with contrasting pinafores. The men wear flat caps, wide-legged trousers, jackets and one man is clearly wearing the carved wooden shoes known as *sabots* in French but which are called *klompen* among the Dutch. The painting is in a square format, 73 x 100 centimeters, composed of oil on a canvas support, and is in fair condition with areas of paint missing at its perimeter, particularly in its lower half.



FIGURE 2 THE SUBJECT WORK

In reports from previous attempts at authentication, it was claimed that a signature reading “Vincent” and initials possibly representing that of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec were present in the upper left corner. These could not be perceived and have not been made clear by more exacting methods such as microscopy, reflectographic imaging, and other tests performed by a scientific laboratory in Milan. However, the Milanese lab did report a small signature in dark paint in the lower left corner of the picture, as indicated in the materials furnished to Van Gogh Experts, as well as the presence of added overpainting in some areas of the work.



FIGURE 3, A DETAIL FROM THE SUBJECT WORK: UPPER LEFT CORNER. NO SIGNATURE IS EVIDENT.

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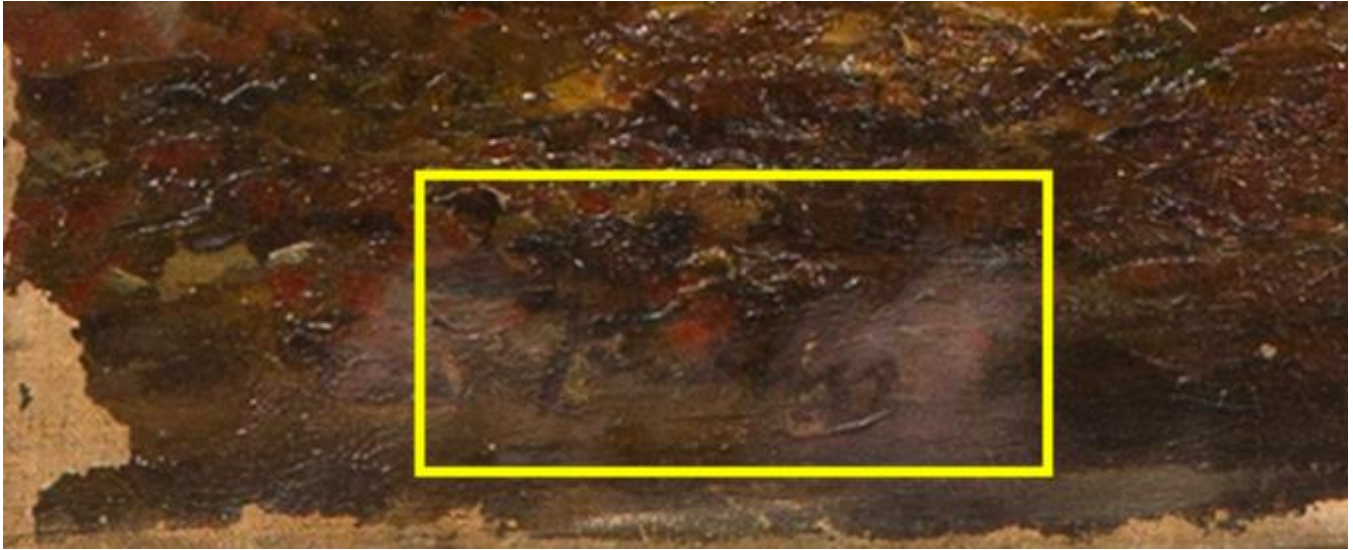


FIGURE 4, LOWER LEFT CORNER, A SIGNATURE IN DARK PAINT

Evidently when it was sold in 1965, the gallery or auction house itself believed it to be a scene set somewhere in Holland, and furthermore probably a copy, as the verso side of the painting reveals.



FIGURE 5, THE SUBJECT WORK, VERSO SIDE: "COPIA CUA(D)RO HOLANDOS"

RESEARCH

The question of whether van Gogh and Lautrec could have collaborated is an interesting one, given that both men studied with Cormon for at least several months. The art research department examined many books and catalogues as well as scholarly articles and websites in order to carry out as thorough an examination as possible.

Of particular interest are the collected letters of Vincent van Gogh. He was an even more prolific writer than he was a painter, and hundreds of his letters, primarily to his brother Theo but to other friends and family members as well, have survived.

These letters have been published, in translation and in the original Dutch, in multiple iterations. The van Gogh Museum has recently made the entire surviving collection available as a searchable database, so that the reader may avail himself of these letters directly. All the letters have been tagged and cross-referenced, so that they can be searched by topic, by recipient, by date, and by any included sketches or illustrations that appear within them. A link to this collection is included in the bibliography that follows. A great deal of scholarship on the subject of van Gogh has been published. Including all of it here would be impossible, but the art research department has selected these materials in consideration of the task at hand and has examined all of the materials that appear in this bibliography closely. A volume of collected letters written by Toulouse-Lautrec was also explored, and appears in this list as well. Because John Peter Russell, an Australian impressionist, also studied with Cormon at the same time as van Gogh and Lautrec, materials relating to his oeuvre were also examined. The reader is encouraged to consult any or all of these to benefit from the same resources.

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Van Gogh and Lautrec were students together in the studio of Fernand Cormon in 1886, but only for a very short time. Van Gogh arrived in Paris on the last day of February in 1886 and was placed with Cormon from March through early June of that year, a bare four months. During that time, according to his own letters, van Gogh spent most of his time indoors in the studio learning to draw and paint the figure from a series of plaster casts. This is corroborated by external sources, which confirm that this was the practice at Cormon's studio at the time.

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1886, van Gogh attended fairly regular weekly meetings held at the studio of Lautrec, which explains why there appears to be no letters exchanged between the two from this period. However, no hint of collaboration with any artist is suggested in van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo or to anyone else. Van Gogh was aiming to create a singular, unique artistic expression and collaborating with another artist would have diluted what he was creating. In his own words, in a letter dispatched from Arles in June of 1888, he declared that Anquetin, a Cloisonnist, would have hated what he was up to in his most recent work and that he did not believe Lautrec would have approved of it either.

Lautrec's letters do not refer to van Gogh with any frequency, and absolutely do not mention any kind of collaboration with van Gogh or any other artist. Lautrec seems to have been more kindly disposed to van Gogh than the other students in Cormon's studio (who appear to have found him strange, as he was much older and prone to periods of utter silence broken by incidents of near-endless chatter) but their friendship does not seem to have been as warm as that between van Gogh and John Peter Russell.

Based on the letters that survive, van Gogh and Russell appear to have enjoyed a pleasant friendship which began when both men were in Cormon's studio, both as outsiders, as they were considerably older than the rest of the students as well as being foreigners.

In the fall of 1886 Russell convinced van Gogh to sit for a portrait, which became a treasured possession specifically mentioned by van Gogh to his brother Theo, as van Gogh's worldly goods were frequently moved on his behalf whenever he moved households. The portrait now

hangs in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and is thought to capture the true essence and energy of the man himself.



FIGURE 6, JOHN PETER RUSSELL, *PORTRAIT OF VINCENT VAN GOGH*, 1886, OIL ON CANVAS, 60.1 x 45.6 CM, VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

Nevertheless, a collaboration between these two artists also seems impossible: they spent a very limited amount of time actually in the same locale. Van Gogh was only a student in Cormon's studio for four months in 1886, and in that same year, Russell left France and

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traveled through Italy and Sicily before settling in Belle-Ile, a remote island on the Brittany coast of France, with his own young family. The two men were never in the same place again between Russell's departure for Italy in 1886 and van Gogh's death in 1890.

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STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

In addition to it being unlikely that van Gogh would have collaborated with anyone, the style of the subject work is clearly not that of van Gogh himself or his associates, including Russell and Lautrec, from whom he was largely physically separate in any case. A selection of pictures created by van Gogh and Lautrec showing their characteristic styles close to the year 1886 is presented below to illustrate the typical style of both artists at the time. Russell's work is not represented here because by dint of his travels in Italy at the time, clearly he could not have been collaborating with van Gogh or Lautrec even if he had been so inclined. The paintings that follow were selected due to their similarity to that of the subject work in terms of content, inasmuch as this is possible as Lautrec rarely engaged in *plein-air* painting, certainly not after moving to Paris from his ancestral home.



FIGURE 7, VINCENT VAN GOGH, *TERRACE IN THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS*, 1886, OIL ON CANVAS, 27 x 46 CM, STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE, WILLIAMSTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS



FIGURE 8, VINCENT VAN GOGH, *SHELTER ON MONTMARTRE*, 1886, OIL ON CANVAS, 35.6 x 27.3 CM, FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO

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FIGURE 9, VINCENT VAN GOGH, *GUINGUETTE*, 1886, OIL ON CANVAS, 64 X 49 CM, MUSÉE D'ORSAY

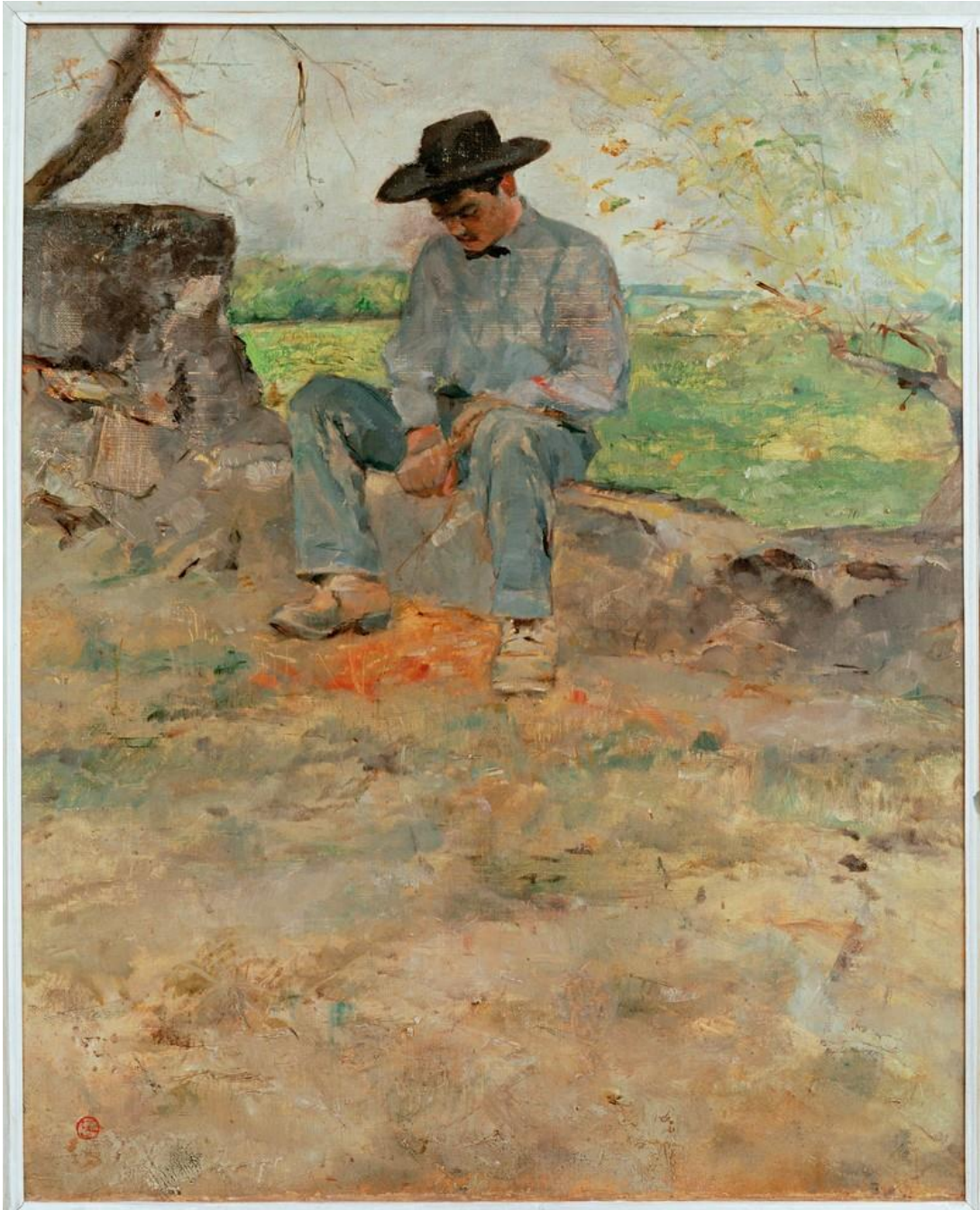


FIGURE 10, HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, *GIOVANE ROUTY AT CELEYRAN*, 1883, OIL ON CANVAS, 61 x 49 CM, MUSÉE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, ALBI, FRANCE

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FIGURE 11, HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, *FARMHAND AT CELEYRAN*, 1882, OIL ON CANVAS, MUSÉE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, ALBI, FRANCE

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FIGURE 12, HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, *Portrait of Jeanne Wenz*, 1886, oil on canvas, 80.7 x 59.5 cm, Art Institute of Chicago

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These selections were as close a match as could be found in order to provide the best comparison to the subject work: in the case of the van Gogh paintings all of them are from 1886, after van Gogh arrived in Paris and worked in Cormon's studio alongside Lautrec, and all of the van Gogh selections are outdoors. In Lautrec's case, we were pressed to find any examples of outdoor scenes, as he clearly preferred to spend his time in the bars and nightclubs of Montmartre, and only one useful example from 1886 was found, that of a portrait of Jeanne Wenz.

All the examples are clearly of an entirely different style than the subject work, both in terms of artistic hand as well as content, and side-by-side comparisons illustrate this.



FIGURE 13, LEFT: THE SUBJECT WORK



FIGURE 14, RIGHT: VINCENT VAN GOGH, *GUINGUETTE*, 1886

Closer inspection using details of both paintings illustrates even further the profound differences in palette and brushstroke.



FIGURE 15, LEFT: DETAIL OF THE SUBJECT WORK

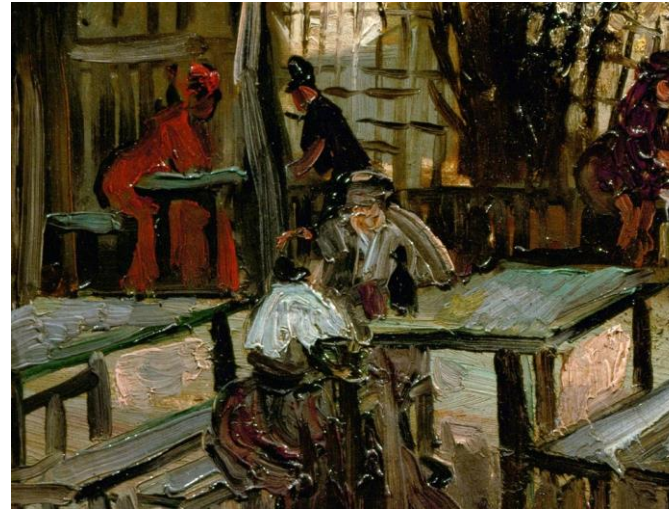


FIGURE 16, RIGHT: DETAIL OF VINCENT VAN GOGH, *GUINGUETTE*, 1886

The subject work utilizes a small, daubing method to apply stippled areas of color to canvas while van Gogh's characteristic approach is to use a richly loaded brush or a palette knife in some areas to apply a thick swath of paint. The figures at left are carefully created, with details such as facial features, folds in clothing, and individual blossoms among the flowers. At right, the figures in the van Gogh painting are described with just a few strokes, and the furniture is rendered simply as well. The palette at left in the subject work is filled with bright, high-value hues with added white to model volumes, such as the front of the woman's blue skirt and the shoulder of the man's jacket. In the van Gogh picture to the right, the artist uses lower-value colors, and rather than mixing white or black into pure colors to modulate them, instead he adds a discrete stroke of white or areas of black to create dimensionality.

In van Gogh's *Shelter at Montmartre*, the strokes that compose the blue sky are clearly different than those which are present in the subject work: van Gogh's are strongly linear, with clear impressions of the brush in the paint, while the subject work at right is composed of small dabs of paint in which the brush is far less evident.

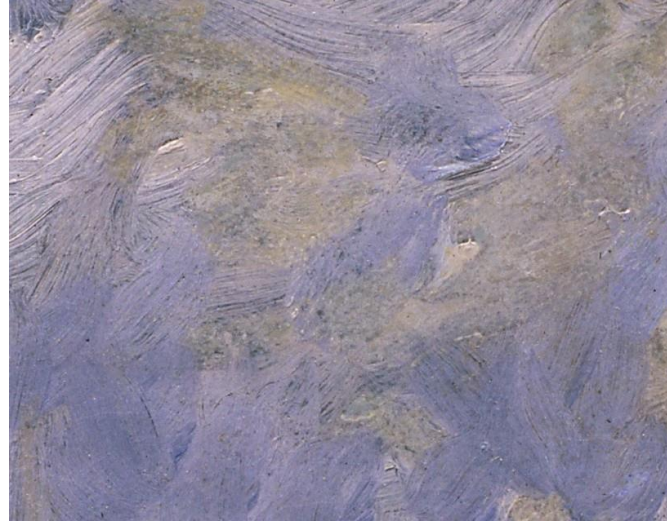


FIGURE 17, LEFT: THE SUBJECT WORK

FIGURE 18, RIGHT: VINCENT VAN GOGH, *SHELTER ON MONTMARTRE*, 1886

Lautrec's individual style is also quite far removed from that of the subject work. As stated, Van Gogh Experts experienced some difficulty in finding suitable comparative material because Lautrec's oeuvre is chiefly composed of scenes derived from the Paris demimonds: singers, dancers, and drinkers in the bars and nightclubs of Montmartre. Rarely did he paint outdoors, and when he did so it was before moving to Paris to study with Cormon. His portrait of a local farmhand at his family's estate shows a bright palette, but a very different stroke than that used in the subject work.



FIGURE 19, LEFT, THE SUBJECT WORK



FIGURE 20, RIGHT, HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, *FARMHAND AT CELEYRAN*, 1882

Despite the similarities of the way in which the two men are dressed, the differences between artistic hands at work is clear: Lautrec's approach is linear, almost like sketching rather than painting, while the subject work's dabbed, stippled surface is evident in this area of the picture too.

CONCLUSION

Because there is a substantial amount of factual evidence to prove that van Gogh and Lautrec did not collaborate, and enough evidence to rule out Russell as a collaborator as well, Van Gogh Experts concludes that this is not a work that is the product of collaboration between van Gogh and Lautrec or van Gogh and Russell, and finally that it is not a work solely by van Gogh, Lautrec or Russell. In addition to factual evidence in the form of published letters and close biographical details published in catalogs, monographs and scholarly articles, the artistic styles of van Gogh and Lautrec are far too vastly removed from that seen in the subject work to be considered at all related.

However, the Art Research Department at Van Gogh Experts discovered paintings that are quite similar in style to that of the subject work, painted by other artists. After some investigation, it became clear that what has been submitted for examination is a genre painting of a Dutch flower market, a subject which has been treated by a number of minor late 19th and early 20th century artists, including F. Max Richter-Reich, Hans Richter-Johannsen, Gustav Prucha, Hans Hermann, and H.M. Gabriel. These genre pictures of Dutch flower markets, often set near the edge of a canal or other body of water, and featuring vendors in traditional Dutch costume, are frequently available for sale through auction houses in Europe and the United States. A selection of these genre paintings has been reproduced here in order to illustrate the similarities with the subject work. These were all sourced from auction house sites, and although no specific dates were provided, all are dated to between 1890 and 1950 in relation to the birth and death dates of the artists responsible.



FIGURE 21, H.M. GABRIEL, FLOWER SELLERS ON THE QUAY, OIL ON CANVAS, 68.6 x 55.9 CM, NO DATE

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FIGURE 22, GUSTAV PRUCHA, FLOWER MARKET ON THE QUAY, 68.5 x 98.5 CM, NO DATE



FIGURE 23, F. MAX RICHTER-REICH, BLUMENMARKT IN AMSTERDAM, 80 X 60 CM, NO DATE

All the paintings discovered by Van Gogh Experts share stylistic elements such as a daubed or stippled approach to applying paint to the canvas, as well as similar content: genre scenes of Dutch flower sellers on the quay, often with sailboats visible, wearing clothing native to the region of North Holland. These elements are present in the subject work as well. All four pictures are presented in the illustration below: the three given above, with the subject work at lower right.

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Based on the unmistakable similarities to extant paintings that have been found, which are on offer through various auction houses in considerable number, Van Gogh Experts concludes that the work submitted for examination is a late 19th or early 20th century genre scene painted by a minor artist, perhaps a Gustav Prucha or an H.M. Gabriel.

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This report comprises 33 (Thirty-three) pages.

The Art Research Department at Van Gogh Experts