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## Self-Portrait

1887

Vincent van Gogh  
Dutch, 1853–1890

In 1886 Vincent van Gogh left his native Holland and settled in Paris, where his beloved brother Theo was a dealer in paintings. Van Gogh created at least twenty-four self-portraits during his two-year stay in the energetic French capital. This early example is modest in size and was painted on prepared artist's board rather than canvas. Its densely dabbed brushwork, which became a hallmark of Van Gogh's style, reflects the artist's response to Georges Seurat's revolutionary pointillist technique in *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—1884*. But what was for Seurat a method based on the cool objectivity of science became in Van Gogh's hands an intense emotional language. The surface of the painting dances with particles of color—intense greens, blues, reds, and oranges. Dominating this dazzling array of staccato dots and dashes are the artist's deep green eyes and the intensity of their gaze. "I prefer painting people's eyes to cathedrals," Van Gogh once wrote to Theo. "However solemn and imposing the latter may be—a human soul, be it that of a poor streetwalker, is more interesting to me." From Paris, Van Gogh traveled to the southern town of Arles for fifteen months. At the time of his death, in 1890, he had actively pursued his art for only five years.

## On View

European Painting and Sculpture, Gallery 241

## Artist

Vincent van Gogh

## Title

Self-Portrait

## Origin

Netherlands

## Date

1887

## Medium

Oil on artist's board, mounted on cradled panel

## Dimensions

41 × 32.5 cm (16 1/8 × 12 13/16 in.)

## Credit Line

Joseph Winterbotham Collection

## Reference Number

1954.326

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## PUBLICATION HISTORY

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- Katharina Bromig-Kolleritz von Novisancz, "Die Selbstbildnisse Vincent van Gogh: Versuch einer kunsthistorischen Erfassung der Darstellungen," Ph. D. diss. (Munich: Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, 1954), pp. 46–48, 101–102.
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- Frank Th. Gribbling, *A Detailed Catalogue with Full Documentation of 272 Works by Vincent van Gogh Belonging to the Collection of the State Museum Kröller-Müller* (Otterlo, 1966), under no. 198.
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