THE ROLE OF VAN GOGH'S SUGGESTIVE COLOUR IN HIS DECORATION CANVASES FOR THE YELLOW HOUSE

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

In the late summer of 1888, Vincent van Gogh undertakes to paint a number of canvases intended to decorate the Yellow House, his rented accommodation in Arles. Between mid August 1888, when this project is initiated in anticipation of sharing the Yellow House with Paul Gauguin, and October 23 or 24, 1888, when Gauguin arrives in Arles from Pont Aven, seventeen size 30 canvases for this decoration are painted. In describing two of these canvases to Theo van Gogh, Vincent explicitly states that much of the meaning of his subject matter is to be conveyed by the use of suggestive or expressive colour. Several other times during the period in which the decoration is Vincent's major concern, a reference is made in the letters to Theo, to a concern with exploring the suggestive and expressive possibilities of colour. This thesis examines the nature of Vincent's concept of suggestive colour, and its role in the decoration canvases for the Yellow House. As neither aspect of this topic have been examined in the van Gogh literature, this thesis is divided into two parts.

In Part One, the concern with suggestive colour is shown to have its roots in Nuenen in 1884 and 1885 where Vincent was introduced to several art texts that attributed the impact of Delacroix' paintings to his understanding
of the colour laws, in particular the various effects achieved through the juxtaposition or admixture of complementary colours. An analysis of Vincent's writings at this time shows that he gives a symbolic significance to his use of complementary admixtures and uses such colours to convey a particular aspect of his subject matter. While Vincent's palette and technique change radically in Paris and Arles due to Vincent's contact with impressionism and neoimpressionism and the exaggerated colour effects of the Japanese print, the re-emergence of a concern with the suggestive properties of colour which is announced in the early summer of 1888, is based to a large extent on the significance given to complementary relationships formed in Nuenen. An analysis of the colour structures in several canvases executed in July and early August of 1888, in light of the special role given to complementary relationships, shows that Vincent intended his use of complementary colours to convey much of the meaning of his images.

Part Two examines the decoration canvases for the Yellow House. A study of Vincent's letters reveals the Yellow House as an essential part of Vincent's vision of a studio in the south that would give asylum and refuge to artists in need. This studio was to provide for artists of the present and the future, as Vincent sees his own role as a painter as a link in a chain of artists working with colour. By establishing a studio that is to remove the threat of poverty and hardship
from artistic life Vincent hoped to create a stable and serene environment, enabling artists to work productively, in turn effecting an artistic renaissance and a new art of colour. Examined individually within this context several of the decoration canvases are shown to refer to this vision, suggesting a thematic link for the series as a whole. Suggestive colour continues as a major concern during the period in which the decoration canvases are painted. Vincent sees complementary harmonies and contrasts as able to convey "l'idées poétiques" and uses such colour relationships in several of the canvases of the series to convey important aspects of meaning. The decoration for the Yellow House thus emerges as a crystallization of Vincent's vision of an association of artists working towards a renaissance, and as a major effort to formulate an expressive art in the summer and fall of 1888. Both aspects establish the series as an important development in the evolution of Vincent's art and theory.
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INTRODUCTION

In letter 526, (c.21 August, 1888), Vincent van Gogh writes to his brother Theo to let him know that he has just received a letter from Paul Gauguin in Pont Aven. Vincent understands this letter as an indication that Gauguin is willing to join him in Arles.

Je t'ecris bien à la hate, mais pour te dire que je viens de recevoir un mot de Gauguin, qui dit qu'il n'a pas écrit beau-coup, mais se dit toujours prêt à venir dans le midi, aussitôt que le chance le permettra.

The concept of joining with Gauguin had concerned Vincent since the spring of 1888 when Gauguin had written to Theo describing his poor financial situation at Pont Aven, and had asked for some assistance. Upon hearing of Gauguins plight, no doubt in a letter from Theo, Vincent had suggested to his brother, in letter 493, (c. 5 June, 1888), and to Gauguin in letter 494a, (c. 5 June, 1888), that Gauguin and himself share both accommodation in Arles, and the support money that Theo was sending to Vincent. The accommodation in Arles was to be the Yellow House that Vincent had rented in May of 1888, which he planned both to live in and to use as a studio. Gauguin appears to have been slow to respond definitely to this proposal that he join Vincent in the south of France. It is no doubt on this account that Vincent responds so enthusiastically in letter 526,
(c. 21 August, 1888) to the prospect of Gauguin coming to Arles. Vincent informs Theo in this letter that in the hope of living in his studio with Gauguin, he plans to paint a decoration of sunflowers, that will ultimately comprise twelve canvases. He is already at work, it is explained, on three such canvases.

Je suis en train de peindre avec l'entrain d'un Marseillais mangeant la bouillabaisse, ce qui ne t'étonnera pas lorsqu'il s'agit de peindre des grands Tournesols.

J'ai trois toiles en train....

Dans l'espoir de vivre dans un atelier à nous avec G. (Gauguin), je voudrais faire une décoration pour l'atelier. Rien que des grands Tournesols....

Enfin si j'exécute ce plan, il y aura une douzaine de panneaux. Le tout sera une symphonie en bleu et jaune donc.

A total of four sunflower canvases are painted in the last weeks of August. The first three are described in letter 526, (c.21 August, 1888).

J'ai trois toiles en train. 1) 3 grosses fleurs dans une vase vert, fond clair, toile de 15; 2) 3 fleurs, une fleur en semence et effeuillée et un bouton sur fond bleu de roi, toile de 25; 3) douze fleurs et boutons dans un vase jaune (toile de 30). Le dernier est donc clair sur clair et sera le meilleur j'espère.

A fourth sunflower canvas is described in letter 527, (c.22 August, 1888). The three sunflower canvases described here correspond to, Vase with Three Sunflowers, F.453, Vase with Five Sunflowers, F.459, and Vase with Twelve Sunflowers, F.456. While Vincent erroneously describes the sizes of the Vase with Three Sunflowers, F.453, and Vase with Five Sunflowers, F.459, the Vase with Five Sunflowers, F.456, is correctly described a size 30 canvas.
Maintenant j'en suis au quatrième tableau de tournesols.
Ce quatrième est un bouquet de quatorze fleurs et est sur fond jaune....

(527)

...il ya un nouveau bouquet de quatorze fleurs sur fond jaune vert... toile de 30....

(528)

This canvas corresponds to the size 30 canvas, *Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers*, F.454.

Between the announcement of the decoration project in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), and Gauguin's arrival in Arles on the 23 or 24 October, 1888, the concept and plan of the decoration canvases change several times. Initially, in the first letters that discuss the sunflower canvases as a decoration, Vincent indicates that these canvases are for "l'atelier", and he does not indicate whether he means by this term a specific studio area, or the house as a whole. However, by the beginning of the second week in September it is clear that he intends some six sunflower canvases to hang in the guest room of the Yellow House, the room Vincent hopes Gauguin will stay in if he comes to Arles. Thus to Theo in letter 534, (9 September, 1888), Vincent explains,

La chambre ou alors tu logeras, ou qui sera à Gauguin, si G. vienne, aura sur les murs blancs une décoration des grandes tournesols jaunes.
... Mais tu verras ces grand tableaux des bouquets de 12, de 14 tournesols, fourrés dans ce tout petit boudoir avec un lit joli, avec tout le reste élégant.

(534)
In letter W7 (9 and 16 September, 1888), Vincent also describes how the guest room is to be decorated with sunflowers.

Dans ce moment je suis en train de meubler l'atelier de façon à pouvoir toujours loger quelqu'un. Car il y a deux petites pièces en haut....Une de ces pièces je l'arrangerai pour loger un ami....

Dans cette toute petite pièce je veux, à la japonais, fourrer au moins 6 très grandes toiles, surtout les enormes bouquets de tournesols.

By the beginning of the second week in September then, with four sunflower canvases completed, the plan for a dozen sunflower canvases is altered to a series of six canvases which are to decorate Gauguin's room. At the same time, in letters 534, (9 September, 1888), and W7, (9 and 16 September, 1888), Vincent also indicates that he plans a decoration of portraits. To Wil, in W7, (9 and 16 September, 1888), he explains that he intends to paint portraits, and studies with figures for his bedroom.

Une de ces pièces je l'arrangerai pour loger un ami et l'autre sera pour moi.

Là je veux rien que des chaises de paille et une table et un lit en bois blanc.

Mais j'y veux un grand luxe de portraits et d'études peintes de figures que je compte faire au fur et à mesure.

To Theo in letter 534, (9 September, 1888) Vincent assigns a decoration of portraits to the studio of the Yellow House.

Et l'atelier, le carreaux rouges du sol, les murs et le plafond blanc, les chaises paysannes, le table en bois blanc, avec j'espère décoration de portraits.
Over the following weeks Vincent refers frequently to his plan to paint a group of canvases referred to as "la décoration," that will have a financial worth of 10,000 francs, and as well, will be a body of work that could be exhibited in 1889. However, there is no further indication in the existing letters to Theo as to what this group of paintings for the decoration will comprise in terms of subject matter or content.

It is only in letter 552, (13 October, 1888), that Vincent identifies fifteen size 30 canvases, painted in the preceding weeks, as comprising the decoration for the Yellow House. In this letter, following a description of five size 30 canvases that he has just recently completed, Vincent explains,

C'est cinq toiles que j'ai mises en train cette semaine, cela porte je crois à quinze le nombre de ces toiles de 30 pour la décoration.

2 toiles de tournesols
3 - de jardin du poète
2 - autre jardin
1 - café du nuit
1 - Pont de Trinquetaille
1 - Pont du chemin de fer
1 - la maison
1 - la diligence, de Tarascon
1 - la nuit etoilée
1 - les sillons
1 - la vigne

(552)

Vincent's description of the size 30 canvases in this letter correspond to the following subjects painted in the previous weeks.

"2 toiles de tournesols" - Vase with Twelve Sunflowers
F.456, 91 X 71 cm. (plate 1)
- Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers
F.454, 93 X 73 cm. (plate 2)
"3 - de jardin du poète" - The Poets' Garden, F.468, 73 X 92 cm. (plate 4)
- The Poets' Garden, canvas lost, and represented only by the drawing F.1465. (plate 5).
- The Poets' Garden, F. 479, 73 X 92 cm. (plate 16)

"2 - autre jardin"
- two canvases of the following three:
  - The Cedar Walk, F.470, 73 X 92 cm. (plate 11)
  - The Entrance to the Public Garden, F.566, 72.5 X 91 cm (plate 12)
  - The Public Garden, F.472, 72 X 93 cm. (plate 13)

"1 - café de nuit"
- The Night Café, F. 463, 70 X 89 cm. (plate 3).

"1 - Pont de Trinquetaille"
- The Iron Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.481, 73.5 X 92.5 cm. (plate 14)

"1 - Pont du chemin de fer"
- The Railway Bridge, F.480, 71 X 92 cm. (plate 15)

"1 - la maison"
- The House, F.464, 94 X 76 cm. (plate 9)

"1 - la diligence Tarascon"
- The Tarascon Diligence, F. 478, 72 X 92 cm. (plate 10)

"1 - la nuit étoilée"
- The Starry Night, F. 474, 72.5 X 92 cm. (plate 7).

"1 - les sillons"
- The Furrows, F. 574, 72.5 X 92 cm. (plate 6).

"1 - les vignes"
- The Vineyard, F.475, 72 X 92 cm. (plate 8).
Two more size 30 canvases are added to the decoration of the Yellow House prior to Gauguin's arrival on October 23rd, of 24th, 1888. In letter 554,(16 October, 1888), Vincent describes a size 30 canvas, The Bedroom, F. 482, 72 X 90 cm., (plate 18), and in letter B22,(17 October, 1888), to Gauguin, it is explained that this canvas is also for the decoration of the house. In letter 556,(21 or 22 October, 1888) written just prior to Gauguin's arrival, a fourth canvas of the Poets' Garden series, F.485, 75 X 92 cm., (plate 17), is added to the decoration scheme for Gauguin's room. By the time of Gauguin's arrival in Arles on October 23 or 24, 1888, seventeen size 30 canvases are described as comprising the decoration for the Yellow House.

Vincent's concern with the canvases for the decoration of the Yellow House coincides with an important development in his art. In letter 520;(11 August, 1888) written less than two weeks prior to the announcement of the plan for a decoration of canvases, Vincent explains that a change is taking place in his art, as he is concerned with expressing himself forcibly through his use of colour. This change is formulated as a rejection of an impressionist vision in favour of concepts held prior to the Paris period, and, "les idées de Delacroix."

Il y a seulement que je trouve que ce que j'ai appris à Paris s'en va et que je reviens à mes idées qui m'étaient venues, avant de connaître les impressionistes.

Et je serais, peu étonné, si sous peu les impressionistes trouveraient à redire sur ma façon de faire, qui à plutôt été fécondée par les idées de Delacroix, que parles leurs.

Car au lieu de chercher à rendre
exactement ce que j'ai devant les yeux,
je me sers de la couleur plus arbitrairement
pour m'exprimer fortement.

(520)

In letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), that announces the decoration, reference is made to the rejection of impressionist technique.

Seulement je commence de plus en plus
à chercher une technique simple, qui peut-
être n'est pas impressioniste. Je voudrais
peindre de façon, qu'à la rigeur tout le
monde qui à des yeux, puisse y voir clair.

(526)

While Vincent explains in his following letter, 527, (c. 22 August, 1888), that what he means by a simple technique is the use of a thick impasto and,"un travail de la brosse sans
pointille ou autre chose, rien que la touche variée", the link between Vincent's new and simple technique, and his movement toward expressive and exaggerated colour is suggested in letter 539, (18 September, 1888). Here Vincent observes that although the painting technique of the neoimpressionists Seurat and Signac is both new and interesting, he himself is turning toward a suggestive use of colour. Again this development is explained as a return to concerns at work in Nuenen prior to the Paris period; the artist Monticelli as well as Delacroix is cited as a precursor in this field.

Qui fait Seurat...je réfléchis souvent à
son système et toutefois je ne le suivrai
pas du tout, mais lui est coloriste originale
et c'est la même chose pour Signac, mais à
un autre degré, les pointilleurs ont trouvé
du neuf et je les aime tout de même bien.
Mais moi - je le dis franchement - je reviens
plutôt à ce que je cherchais avant de venir à
Paris, et je ne sais si quelqu'un avant
moi ait parlé de couleur
suggestive, mais Delacroix et Monticelli tout en ayant pas parlé, l'ont faite. Mais moi je suis encore comme j'étais à Nuenen, lorsque j'ai fait un vain effort pour apprendre la musique, alors déjà telle-ment je sentais les rapports qu'il y a entre notre couleur et la musique de Wagner.

(539)

The passages above indicate that at the time when the decoration canvases for the Yellow House were a major focus for Vincent, he was also concerned with a concept of suggestive colour, and with the formulation of a new painting technique. This thesis studies the nature of Vincent's concept of suggestive colour, and it's relation to the decoration canvases for the Yellow House. To examine this topic this thesis has been divided into two parts. In Part One comprised of four chapters, Vincent's concern with colour from 1883-1888 is surveyed. Chapter I examines the expressive power given to colour and to complementary colour relationships in Nuenen, (November 1883-November 1885), as Vincent explains in the summer and fall of 1888 that his concept of suggestive and expressive colour derives from ideas formed at this time. Chapter II surveys Vincent's introduction to a palette based on high-valued and pure hues and a new technique for rendering light and colour in Paris, (March 1886-February 1888). Chapter III surveys the implementation of exaggerated colour effects in Arles, (February 1888- July 1888), important to Vincent's concern with expressive colour in the summer and fall of 1888. In Chapter IV the re-emergence of a
concern with suggestive colour in four canvases of July and August, 1888, is shown to be based on the significance given to complementary colour relationships first formed in Nuenen, but adapted to the concern with exaggerated colour effects developed over the preceding months in Arles.

Part Two, comprised of two chapters, studies the decoration for the Yellow House. Chapter V outlines Vincent's concept of the Yellow House, as a studio in the south that will carry on the work of past generations of colourists, give refuge to artists of the present, and thus effect a future art of colour. Chapter VI examines the individual canvases for the decoration and the relationship of colour, technique, and subject matter to the intended meaning of each. Two important aspects emerge from this examination. First, the decoration canvases have not been studied as individual canvases belonging to the decoration series, or as a group. In terms of subject matter and theme alone, several of these canvases, when set within the context of Vincent's concept of the Yellow House, take on new meanings. Second, all the canvases in terms of their use of exaggerated colour and a special technique, allude to the vision of a new art of colour centered in the south. Suggestive colour, shown to be a concern throughout the period in which the decoration is painted, and at work in several of the individual canvases, reveals the way in which Vincent sought to express important aspects of subject and theme. The decoration thus emerges both as a series that reflects the aims of Vincent's studio in the south, and as a major effort on Vincent's part to develop an expressive art prior to Gauguin's arrival in Arles.
PART ONE

THE ROLE OF COLOUR 1883 - 1888.
CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTION TO COLOUR THEORY AND EXPRESSIVE COLOUR IN NUENEN

In September of 1883 Vincent left the Hague for the remote province of Drenthe to immerse himself in painting. At this time, in letter 332, (c. 12 October, 1883), in a passage that appears to have been prompted by a reference in one of Theo's letters to the German painter of rural labourers, Max Liebermann, Vincent indicates his concept of colour in painting.

You write to me about Liebermann: his palette consists of slate gray tones, principally running from brown to yellow- ish gray.

I have never seen anything of his but now that I have seen the landscape here, I can understand perfectly how logically he is lead to it...if I myself find what I seek...I shall certainly often do it in the same way, in that chromatic gamut.

Mind you to see it like that, one must not look at the local colour by itself, but in conjunction with the colour of the sky. That sky is gray—but so iridescent that even our pure white would be unable to render this light and sunshine. Now if one begins by painting this sky gray, thus remaining far below the intensity of nature, how much more necessary it is to tone down the brown and yellowish grays of the soil to a lower key.

(332)

In this passage a prevalent use of colour in nineteenth century painting is outlined. By recreating a scale of colours that appears in nature in a lower valued scale, an artist is able to render the light and dark contrasts of a scene while at the
same time maintaining a unified tonal harmony throughout the canvas. 30 Within this context Vincent's own preference is for a low valued brown tonal scheme as he indicates in letter 368, (c. 15 May, 1884), when he describes his own work.

...you will not find the silvery tones in my work done here, but rather brown ones (bitumen for instance, and bister), which I do not doubt some people will disapprove of.

(368) 31

A preference for such a palette is certainly in line with the colour scheme of the two peasant painters whom Vincent greatly admired at this time, Millet and Israels. 32 Indeed, Vincent relates to Theo in letter 371, (beginning of June, 1884), that he had heard that Israels himself recommended a low valued colour scheme.

When I was in the Hague, I heard things Israels had said about starting with a deep colour scheme, thus making even relatively dark colours seem light. In short to express light by opposing it to black.

(371)

Vincent's written observations of the countryside around Drenthe indicate that he tended to look at both figures and landscape around him in terms of strong light and dark contrasts. In letter 330, (c. mid October, 1883), Vincent describes a sketch he has made of dark figures that are silhouetted, "against the vibrating evening sky." A similar effect is described in letter 331 (c. 6 or 7 October, 1883).

There are other contrasts of black and white here. For instance, a canal with white sandy banks across a pitch black plain. In the above sketch (a sketch of a peatfield is incorporated into Vincent's letter), you see it too, black figures
against a white sky...little black figures spreading linen out to bleach. (331)

In letter 340, (16 November, 1883), a woman at a spinning wheel is described to support Vincent's conclusion that, "everywhere is the contrast of dark and white". When, following Vincent's move to Nuenen in November of 1883 a major pictorial theme is provided by the local weavers, Vincent's focus on this subject matter from January to July 1884 illustrates a continued manipulation of similar light and dark contrast effects to isolate define, and give character to his subjects. In the canvases painted during this period, dark figures of weavers at their looms are set against daylit windows or lamplight; in one case a weaver and loom are set against a white interior wall. It is important to emphasize that Vincent's vision at this time is based on such low valued tonal schemes that implement these light against dark contrasts. In the late spring of 1884 when Vincent is first introduced to the use of complementary colour contrasts and harmonies, this concern provides the framework within which his new knowledge of colour is interpreted and applied.

In letter 370, (beginning of June, 1884), Vincent announces to Theo that he is reading Charles Blanc's, *Artistes de mon temps*. Blanc, at one time a director of Ecole des Beaux Arts, published several works on art history and art theory during his career. His *Artistes de mon temps*, is composed of fifteen chapters each devoted to a French artist of the nineteenth century. It is the chapter on Delacroix, whom Blanc knew personally during the last years of the artist's life, that Vincent cites to Theo in
letter 370, (beginning of June, 1884). Vincent quotes directly from Blanc's account of an incident set in the Louvre three months prior to Delacroix's death. Blanc relates how Delacroix has overheard Blanc's observation to a friend that, "les grandes coloristes sont ceux qui ne font pas le ton locale." Delacroix agrees with Blanc and cites as an example of this phenomenon, the palette of Paul Veronese.

Cela est parfaitement vrai dit-il, 'voilà un ton par exemple (il montrait du doigt le ton gris et sale du pavé) eh bien, si l'on disait à Paul Veronèse: peignez-moi une belle femme blonde dont la chair soit de ce ton-là, il la peindrait, et la femme serait une blonde dans son tableau.'

Vincent underlines in this letter what is for him the important point in Blanc's account, -- that a gray pavement tone may be perceived as a light tone in a painting when set against darker colours. Vincent reasserts this point later in this same letter.

As to dark colours, in my opinion, one must not judge the colours of a picture separately; a dark colour, for instance, next to a strong brownish red, a dark blue or olive green may express the very delicate fresh green of a meadow or a little cornfield.

Vincent then cites the example of Corot's evening skies where

There are colours which are very luminous in the picture and, considered separately are in fact of a rather dark grayish tone.

That Vincent has found a passage here that seemingly corroborates his own views and practice of colour in painting, is clear, and more than likely accounts for the artist's enjoyment of this particular excerpt.
There is another important part of this same article that affects Vincent's concept of colour profoundly. In his chapter on Delacroix, Blanc gives a brief but important summary of the basic principles of colour. The seven hues that comprise white light—violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red—are defined and divided into "primitive" hues and binary hues. Blanc explains that the three irreducible primitive or primary hues, red, yellow, blue, are combined to produce the binary or secondary hues, green, (blue + yellow), orange, (red + yellow), and violet, (red + blue). Each of these binary hues bears a special "complementary" relation to the one primary hue that is left out of its make-up. Blanc then proceeds to explain, "de la loi contraste simultané des couleurs" established by M.E. Chevreul, whose researches into colour relationships were published in 1839 as, De la loi contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortment des objets colorés. Blanc's summary of Chevreul touches upon the major visual effects that occur when two hues or hue variations are juxtaposed. If two complementaries of equal value are juxtaposed, the result is an "exaltation réciproque", as the intensity of each of these hues is increased by their proximity. Blanc goes so far as to observe that this juxtaposition intensifies a complementary pair to such a violent intensity that "les yeux humaines pourront à piene en supporter la vue." It is pointed out, however, that if these same complementaries are mixed additively, as in the mixture of oil pigments, rather than juxtaposed, the result is not a mutual intensification, but the destruction of the individual
hues to produce, "un gris absolument incolore." This neutral gray that is the product of the mixture of equal parts of a complementary pair, varies if the pigments are mixed in unequal portions. Thus, if a greater amount of green is mixed with a lesser amount of its complementary, red, the result is a green-gray as the hues, "ne se détruiront que partiellement et en aura un ton rompu qui sera un variété du gris." Blanc explains that this unequal mixture of complementaries which creates a broken colour, "un ton rompu", gives birth to various effects of harmony and contrast.

Qui si maintenant on rapproche les semblables à l'état pur, mais à divers degrés d'énergie, par exemple le bleu foncé et le bleu clair on obtiendra un autre effet, dans lequel il y aura contrastes par la différence d'intensité et harmonie par le similitude des couleurs. Enfin si deux semblables sont juxtaposées l'une à l'état pur, l'autre rompue, par exemple du bleu pur avec du bleu gris, il en résultera un autre genre de contraste qui sera tempéré par l'analogie.

A separate colour phenomenon, "le mélange optique", that occurs when small areas of separate colour are perceived at a distance as one colour, is also briefly outlined.

Deux couleurs juxtaposée dans certaines proportiones...formeront une troisième couleur que nos regards perceveront à distance sans que le tissueur ou le peintre l'aient écrite. Cette troisième couleur est un résultante que l'artiste à prevue et qui est née du mélange optique.

This outline of the complementary relationships in Artistes de mon temps, though brief, is presented as the source for Eugène Delacroix's achievement in painting. Blanc observes that Delacroix understood "les secrets...des couleurs". In outlining the effects
of harmony and contrast that may be achieved through juxtapositions of broken colours with pure hues, Blanc notes these same colour combinations give Delacroix's paintings their passages of harmony and contrast which in turn give his works their expressive quality. Blanc also emphasizes Delacroix's careful adjustment of colour relationships to the mood of his subject.

Eugène Delacroix n'était pas seulement en possession des règles mathématiques de la couleur; il en comprenait les harmonies morales, il en savait mieux que personne au monde le langage dramatique, la poésie, et voilà véritablement le secret qu'il n'a dit à aucun élève; mais ses méthodes de coloration elles sont tellement sûres que jamais la plus petit mépris ne lui est échappée; elles sont calculées avec tant de rigueur que si l'on essayait d'enlever ou d'ajouter un seul ton dans son tableau, si on en modifiait la nuance, ou qu'on en voulût changer la place, la machine entière s'écroulerait.

The manipulation of colour relationships such as the simultaneous contrast of complementaries is compared to musical harmony by Blanc, and Delacroix's use of such complementary harmonies and contrasts is described as effecting "un poesie nouvelle."

...le terrible harmonie de couleurs... faisait vibrer comme un drame, en plutôt cette harmonie le gubre était le fond même de la tragedie. Une sorte de lyrism se trouvait exprime dans la seule qualité des tons qui existent par leur hostilité, se rapprochent par l'analogie des contraires, et qui, en se heurtant, se reconcilient. Tout un poesie nouvelle venait de naitre dans cette ecole français...

To Vincent, this account of the colour properties and the possible expressive effects of complementary harmonies and contrasts, was a revelation. Thus, at the end of letter 370,
June, 1884), in which he had announced that he was reading Blanc, Vincent promises that he will soon, "copy another part of that article on Delacroix about the laws which always remain true for colours." From this point onwards, Vincent's letters are filled with terms and phrases alluding to the colour laws as explained in Blanc's book. In letter 371, (beginning of June, 1884), Vincent observes that much of what Blanc wrote is unfortunately not common knowledge. To emphasize this point he asks Theo,

Do you know what 'un ton entier' and 'un ton rompu' is?... What is meant by rompre? Such things one ought to know theoretically also, either practically as a painter, or in discussing colour as a connoisseur.
Most people give it whatever meaning they like, and yet these words, for instance, have a very definite significance. The laws of the colours are unutterably beautiful, just because they are not accidental.

(371)

The potential ability of these laws to determine calculable effects that remove chance and accident from painting was considered a virtue by Vincent. He precedes the passage quoted above, with the observation, "What one feels by instinct or intuition often becomes definite and clear if one is guided in one's efforts by some really practical words." Vincent also suggests in this letter that the traditional concept of artistic genius may even be altered as a result of adherence to such laws.

That aspects of Vincent's way of seeing are changed by this sudden introduction to Blanc's colour laws is indicated in letter 372, (beginning of June, 1884). In a striking passage to Theo, describing a woman in the cornfields, a concern with complementary
contrasts permeates Vincent's vision.

I have not yet started what struck me most in nature recently for want of a good model. The half ripe cornfields are at present of a dark golden tone, ruddy or gold bronze. This is raised to a maximum of effect by the contrast with the broken cobalt tone of the sky.

Imagine...women's figures very energetic with sun-bronzed faces and arms and feet, with dusty, coarse indigo clothes...while on the way to their work they pass through the corn along a dusty path of reddish-violet with some green weeds.

...it demands great exactness, and one is not at liberty to deviate from the colours of the costume, as the effect lies in the analogy of the broken indigo tone with the broken cobalt tone, intensified by the secret elements or orange in the ruddy bronze of the corn.

Vincent sees the orange/blue contrasts described in this passage as, "a good impression of summer", and proceeds to describe each of the seasons in terms of the complementary pairs red/green and yellow/violet and black/white.

Spring is tender, green young corn and pink blossoms.

Autumn is the contrast of the yellow leaves with violet tones.

Winter is the snow with the black silhouettes.

But now, if summer is the contrast of blues with an element of orange in the golden bronze of the corn, one could paint a picture which expressed the mood of the seasons in each of the contrasts of the complementary colours (red and green, blue and orange, yellow and violet, white and black).

That Vincent at this point tends to visualize a scene or mood in terms of these complementary relationships indicates the extent to which he has absorbed Blanc's accounts of the colour laws, and especially the law of the simultaneous contrast of
colours which governs the relationship of complementary colours.\textsuperscript{60}

In the fall of 1884 Vincent purchases Charles Blanc's Grammaire des arts du dessin.\textsuperscript{61} The Grammaire, discusses the history and theory of drawing, engraving, painting, and sculpture and includes short descriptions of the achievements of particular cultures and particular artists.\textsuperscript{62} At the outset of this book, in the chapter, "Du Dessin et de la Couleur", Blanc makes clear that line in art, as the common denominator of architecture, sculpture and painting, is superior to colour which is associated with only one of the visual arts, painting.\textsuperscript{63} Blanc sees the superiority of line evidenced in nature, where the form or shape of objects is invariable and absolute. In contrast, colour is variable and ever-changing.\textsuperscript{64} Both have an expressive power according to Blanc. Line, he explains, projects thoughts and ideas and affects the mind.\textsuperscript{65} Colour speaks to what Blanc calls the emotions of the heart and soul. Describing colours in nature, Blanc writes,

C'est elle (nature) qui fait naître sous nos pas ces fleurs sans nombre qui révèlent des couleurs...et qui suivant la disposition de nos coeurs, nous offrent, en s'élevant au blanc, des nuances gaies, ou en descen-dant au noir des teintes mélancoliques.... Là, des couleurs plus modestes et, pour ainsi dire, d'un mode mineur, répondant aux tristesses de notre âme....\textsuperscript{66}

Colour principles are outlined in Book III, entitled "Peinture". The Grammaire was written prior to Artistes de mon temps, and several points noted only briefly in the short dis-cussion of colour relationships in Blanc's article on Delacroix.
are dealt with more fully in the Grammaire. Two colour wheels in the Grammaire indicate the complementary relationships of the primary and secondary hues, and the intermediate hues that result from the mixing of a primary with its adjacent secondary.\(^67\) An effect of the law of simultaneous contrast, that is, the tendency of a hue to evoke its complementary colour is explained.

\[\ldots\text{un cercle rouge est entouré d'une légère auréole verte, qui va s'affaiblissant à mesure qu'elle s'éloigne; un cercle orange est entouré d'une auréole bleue; un cercle jaune est entouré d'une auréole violette}...\] \(^68\)

Blanc attempts to explain this phenomenon by observing that a hue needs to be completed by its colour opposite, because a complementary pair presents all three primary or primitive hues.\(^69\) The Grammaire also discusses the effects that result when black and white are juxtaposed with other hues.\(^70\) Blanc condenses Chevreul's researches in this area to a simple statement that summarizes the ability of black and white to modify hues.

\[\ldots	ext{appliqués contre telle ou telle couleur en particular, le blanc la rehause, le noir l'abaisse.}\] \(^71\)

The phenomenon of "le mélange optique" is also elaborated.\(^72\)

A late work of Delacroix's, the centre cupola of the Palais du Luxembourg, which suffers poor illumination, is used to describe the vibrant colour effects that may be produced by "le mélange optique". Blanc indicates that the apparently flesh-coloured skin of one figure is rendered by over-painting a bright pink colour with dashes of green.\(^73\) To explain more clearly how this
optical mixture works, diagrams are provided for the reader which show that if the complementary colour areas to be juxtaposed are small enough, "l'oeil ne percevant plus distinctement chacune... l'individualité de la couleur disparaîtra avec l'individualité de form..." Blanc concludes his outline of these colour laws with the warning that the painter must not abandon content to exploitation of colour, but must make his use of colour conform to his thoughts.

Que le coloris joue son vrai rôle, qui est de nous amener le cortège de la nature extérieure et d'associer les splendeurs de la création materielle de l'homme ou à sa présence. Surtout, que le coloriste choisisse dans les harmonies de la couleur celles qui semblent, comme dit le poète, se conformer a sa pensée.

Unlike the enthusiastic response that followed his reading of Artistes de mon temps, Vincent gives no clear indication that he has read the Grammaire except to express his belief that the artist must adhere to certain compositional laws. He writes in letter 381, (October, 1884),

...I am quite sure that colour, that chiaroscuro, that perspective, that tone and that drawing, in short everything has fixed laws which one must and can study like chemistry or algebra...even if one knows ever so much by instinct, that is just the reason to try ever so hard to pass from instinct to reason. (381)

In the spring of 1885 a significant development, crucial to Vincent's approach to complementary colours, may be observed. In letter 401, (c. 13-17 April, 1885), Vincent copies for Theo, "some interesting
pages about colour, namely the great principles that Delacroix believed in. These "pages" are in fact a lengthy excerpt from Blanc's chapter on Eugène Delacroix in Artistes de mon temps, that outlines the relationship of complementary colours, the law of simultaneous contrast, the admixture of complementaries to produce a gray or broken tone, ("un ton rompu"), and the different ways in which harmony or contrast may be achieved by the juxtaposition of analogous or contrasting hues, tones, or tints. In the transcription of this passage that is sent to Theo, Vincent reveals his own particular interest in the colour laws by underlining several phrases that concern the breaking of colours by mixing them with their complementaries, so as to form neutral grays or gray variations. Vincent underlines the following phrases: "ces mêmes couleurs qui s'exaltent par leur juxtaposition se détruiront par leur mélange"; the latter part of a sentence that explains that two complementaries when mixed result in, "un gris absolument incolore"; and the phrase, "un ton rompu". The emphasis that Vincent gives to this passage is clarified in letter 402, (last week of April, 1885), where Vincent indicates that he considers colours broken by their complementaries, ("les tons rompus"), and the varied grays that result, as the very earth colours that he admires and seeks to achieve in his own paintings of peasants.

How striking is that saying about Millet's figures is: 'Son paysan semble peint avec la terre qu'il ensemence!' How exact and how true! And how important it is to know how to mix on the palette those colours which have no name and yet are the real
foundation of everything. Perhaps I daresay positively, the questions of colours, and more precisely of broken and neutral colours will preoccupy you anew.

(402)77

In letter 404, (c. 30 April, 1885), Vincent further indicates that he finds colours that are formed by a mixture of complementaries as more alive and vital than earth colours taken directly from the tube or created by admixtures with black and white. To explain this point Vincent uses the image of woven cloth that was no doubt inspired by a similar allusion in Blanc.78

When the weavers weave that cloth, which I think they call Cheviot, or also the peculiar Scotch plaids, then you know their aim is, for the Cheviot, to get special broken colours and grays, and for the multi-coloured checkered cloth to make the most vivid colours balance each other so that, instead of the issue being rude, the effet produit of the pattern is harmonious at a distance.

A gray woven from red, blue, yellow, dirty white and black threads, a blue that is broken by a green, and orange red, or yellow thread, are quite different from plain colours, that is to say, they are more iridescent, and primary colours become hard, cold, and dead in comparison.

(404)

Vincent was working on the Potato Eaters, F.82, (April-May, 1885), a composition of five figures gathered around a table and sharing a meal of potatoes, at this time, and the significance that Vincent gives to earth colours formed from broken colours outlined in letter 402, (last week of April, 1885), is important to this canvas.

In letter 405, (beginning of May, 1885), written just prior
to sending off the **Potato Eaters**, F. 82, to Theo, Vincent explains that he has created gray colours in this composition by mixing the three primaries, an admixture that corresponds to the mixing of complementaries and the formation of broken colours.\(^{79}\)

...in the white, or instance, hardly any white has been used, but simply the neutral colour, which is made by mixing red, blue, yellow, for instance vermillion, Paris blue and Naples yellow.

Therefore that colour is in itself a pretty dark gray, but in the picture it looks white.

I'll tell you why I do it that way. Here the subject is a gray interior lit by a little lamp.

The dirty linen table cloth, the smoky wall, the dirty caps in which the women have worked in the field...all this proves to be a very dark gray....

(405)

Low valued colours are thus created in a significantly different way than the gray variations that would be determined by the "bister and bitumen" emphasis that Vincent felt was able to express, "the warm chiaroscuro of a close dusty interior", only a year earlier.\(^{80}\)

Vincent clearly sees his use of complementary admixtures and broken colours as particularly able to convey the character of the peasants whose lives are moulded by their labour in the fields. In letter 404, (c. 30 April, 1884), Vincent explains:

"I have tried to emphasize that these people, eating their potatoes in the lamplight have dug the earth with those very hands they put in the dish, and so it (**Potato Eaters**, F. 82), speaks of manual labour.

In letter 405, (beginning May, 1885), Vincent writes of the peasants in the **Potato Eaters**, F. 82,
...the colour they are painted in now is like the colour of a very dusty potato, unpeeled of course.

While doing this I thought how perfect that saying of Millet's about the peasants is: 'Ses paysans semblant peint avec la terre qu'ils ensemencent'. (405)

This passage implies that Vincent's efforts to stress the relationship between the peasants and the soil, leads him to use earth colours, likened here to the colour of an unpeeled potato, to render his peasant figures.

The complementary admixtures that produce the varied grays and broken colours that Vincent seems to see as the earth colours that render "le paysan...peint avec la terre qu'il ensemence", also appear to have an expressive role of their own. In letter 402, (last week of April, 1885), these complementary admixtures are described as, "colours which have no name and yet are the real foundation of everything". In letter 404, (c. 30 April, 1885), such colours are described as, "more iridescent", and therefore, Vincent implies, able to produce paintings that, "are a little more lively as to colour". In contrast, grays, browns, and neutral colours not created by such complementary admixtures are termed "plain colours", and described as, "cold and dead". With these attributes in mind, Vincent's description of the Potato Eaters, F.82, in letter 403 (last week of April, 1885), as having a different quality, "the life especially", that separates it from other works, should possibly be seen as a reference to the use of complementary admixtures to create "les tons rompus", and the varied grays in this canvas. As
Vincent saw a strong link between the peasants and the earth they worked, his enthusiasm for earth colours that are formed from various admixtures of complementaries to depict peasant subjects may stem from his understanding that these colour relationships are derived from the laws of nature. His observations, to the effect that the beauty of the colour laws derives from the fact that they, "always remain true", and are, "not accidental", have been pointed out already. Vincent also sees colour relationships based on complementaries as able to recreate colours as they occur in nature. A passage in letter R57, (second half of August, 1885), in which Vincent describes his work through the winter and spring of 1885, summarizes Vincent's concept of nature as the source for his new use of colour.

The thing that occupied my attention in all of this, was colour. I mean the breaking of the colours--mixing red with green, blue with orange, yellow with violet, always the combination of the complementary colours, their influence on each other, which nature is as full of as light and brown.

(R57)

By drawing his use of colours from nature herself, Vincent seems to imply that the artist may come closer to apprehending the life and character of his subjects. In the case of Vincent's Potato Eaters, F.82, (and as well many of the peasant portrait heads that Vincent painted in this period), the character and life he seeks to convey is so closely bound up with the earth the peasants live on and work, that the broken colours that, "nature is as full of as light and brown", and which for Vincent are the colours that
effectively render, "le paysan peint avec la terre qu'il ensemence, become the most expressive way of underlying this connection.

Vincent studies other colour texts during the Nuenen period. In letters 423, (beginning of September, 1885), and 424, (end September, 1885), Vincent refers to Felix Braquemond's Du Dessin et de la Couleur, a work which Vincent concludes, "comes to the same thing as the theories discovered by Delacroix." In letter R58, (September, 1885), Vincent notes that he is reading, "Silvestre's article on Delacroix". The reference is to Theophile Silvestre's two volume work, Les artistes français, which contains two chapters on Delacroix. Like Blanc, Silvestre underlines the expressive power of Delacroix's colour, and Vincent, in letter R58, (September, 1885), points this out to Rappard.

...the whole article (Silvestre's) demonstrated that the atmosphere of the colours and the tone in his (Delacroix's) pictures was identical with their meaning, the contrast of colours, the broken effect, the reciprocal reacting of black to white, of yellow to violet, of orange to blue, of red to green.

And further, Delacroix writes to a friend, 'la chapelle ou j'ai peinte ma Pieta était tellement obscure que...j'ai été obligé de peindre dans le cadavre du Christ les ombres avec du bleu de Prusse, les lumières avec du jaune de chrome pur'. (R58)

Silvestre's description of Delacroix's colour system is simple. He points out that Delacroix avoided local colour and instead relied on the juxtaposition of complementaries to heighten his colour effects. Silvestre also describes Delacroix's use of a colour-meter to determine exact complementary relationships.
It is important to observe that Silvestre, like Blanc, does not equate specific colours with specific meanings. Rather he emphasizes that colour combinations, contrasts, or subdued harmonies allowed Delacroix to give drama and feelings to his works. Like Blanc, Silvestre suggests that it is this careful orchestration of colour that gives Delacroix's art its parallel with music.

Vincent was intrigued by the possible parallels between colour and music that both Blanc and Silvestre suggested. Anton Kerssemakers has described in his reminiscences, that Vincent's enthusiasm over the possible relation between colour and music led him to study piano at Nuenen, where he compared musical notes with various colours of the palette.

By the end of the Nuenen period, (November 1885), Vincent had been introduced to Blanc's *Artistes de mon temps*, and *Grammaire des arts du dessin*, and Silvestre's *Les Artistes français*, works that underline the importance of colour harmonies and contrasts achieved by complementary juxtapositions and admixtures. These works also emphasize the expressive value of such colour relationships, stress the ability of colour to stir the soul in a way analogous to music, and cite Delacroix as the master in this area.
While Vincent was attracted to the logical pairing of complementary colours, implementing them in his work, and making them an essential aspect of his vision up until the end of the Nuenen period, he also seems to have explored the expressive potential of complementary colours. As has been shown in the preceding chapter, complementary admixtures and the broken colours ("les tons rompus"), appear to have been assimilated into Vincent's concept of the peasant moulded by the earth he works, and used to underline that relationship. Although Vincent's colour undergoes radical changes between 1885 and the summer and autumn of 1888, when a return to colour concepts held in Nuenen is indicated, the contact in Nuenen with texts that attribute an expressive potential to complementary contrasts and harmonies, provides a base upon which Vincent later builds his colour concepts.
CHAPTER II

THE CHANGE IN PALETTE AND TECHNIQUE IN PARIS

In Paris from March, 1886 to February, 1888, Vincent is introduced to the palette and technique of impressionism and neoimpressionism, and the art of the Japanese print. The change that is effected in his art as a result of this contact is important to Vincent's use of colour at Arles in the summer and fall of 1888.

Prior to Vincent's arrival in Paris in March, 1886, he had no clear idea of what impressionism entailed, despite Theo's efforts through 1884 and 1885 to inform his brother of the lighter palette that characterized contemporary Paris art. Arriving in Paris in March, 1886, Vincent was introduced to a wide spectrum of contemporary art. He was able to see and study the works of the orthodox impressionist painters such as Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Camille Pissarro, whose work it was that Theo had probably attempted to describe to Vincent the preceding year in Nuenen. Monet and Renoir took part in the spring "Exposition Internationale" at George Petit's gallery, and the work of these two artists, as well as that of Camille Pissarro and Sisley was carried by Durand Ruel. Vincent was also able to observe the work of artists who were moving away from the concerns, in terms of both style and subject matter, of the orthodox impress-
The eighth (and last) impressionist exhibition, was held in 1886 at the Maison Doré, Rue Lafitte, and opened on May 15th, 1886. While this show included artists such as Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Degas, Guillaumin, and Gauguin, who had participated in earlier impressionist exhibitions, it also presented, in a separate room, the work of Seurat and his followers Signac and Lucien Pissarro, which was to be labelled in September of 1886, "neoimpressionism".

The orthodox impressionists, in pursuit of the impact of colour and light in nature had gradually focused on the use of high valued and pure hues, and the use of hue contrast rather than value contrast as a means of expression. The characteristic loose and irregular brushwork of orthodox impressionism of the late 1870's and early 1880's was able to record quickly the transient light and colour effects, and at the same time impart the focus on light, colour, and atmosphere that rejected a linear demarcation of form. The neoimpressionist artists replaced the "intuitive" and "romantic" approach to light and colour of the orthodox impressionists with a systematic colour theory and technique. Felix Fénéon, writer and art critic, had described Seurat's pointillist technique and special approach to colour in the article "Les Impressionistes", in 

Si, dans La Grande Jatte de M. Seurat, l'on considère, par exemple, un décimètre carré couvert d'un ton uniform, on trouvera sur chacun des centimètres de cette surface, en une tourbillonnante cohue de menues macules, tous les éléments constitutifs du ton. Cette pelouse dans
l'ombre: des touches, en majorité donnent la valeur locale de l'herbe; d'autres, de pourpre, font intervenir la complémentaire du vert; un bleu cyané, provoqué par la proximité d'une nappe d'herbe au soleil, accumule ses criblures vers la ligne de démarcation et les rarifie progressivement en deçà....

Ces couleurs, isolées sur la toile, se recomposent sur la retine: ou a donc non un mélange de couleurs--matières (pigments), mais un mélange de couleurs--lumières....

L'atmosphère est transparante et vibrante singulièrement; la surface semble vaciller. Peut-être cette sensation, qu'on éprouve aussi devant tels autres tableaux de la même salle, s'expliquerait-elle par la théorie de Dove: la retine, prévenue que de faisceaux lumineux distincts agissent sur elle, perçoit par très rapides alternats, et les éléments colorés dissociés et leur résultante.122

As Homer, Loevgren, and Herbert, have pointed out,123 Fénéon's presentation of the theories of Seurat and his circle were accepted by the artists themselves,124 and reflect Fénéon's close contact with the group. In the "Les Impressionistes" article, Fénéon touches upon the basic principles that guided the division of tone in the neimpressionist canvas.125 Fénéon observes that within a given area of the composition, the local colour of an object is evoked by small touches of the appropriately hued pigment.126 The effect of sunlight is represented by small touches of yellow and orange pigment,127 and shaded areas are depicted with attention to the complementaries or colour opposites of objects seen under white light. The complementary of orange yellow that indicates the effect of sunlight is also added to indicate a degree of filtered light.128 Fénéon's reference to the way in which coloured lights or an additive mixture of pigments are
mixed on the retina,\textsuperscript{129} in the "Les Impressionistes" article describes the phenomenon of optical mixture.\textsuperscript{130} Theoretically, pointilist touches of pigment are to recombine on the retina to form a third colour that is higher in intensity than the colour that would be produced by the physical or subtractive mixture of pigments.\textsuperscript{131} However, in neoimpressionist canvases this fusion does not take place; instead, a vibration or oscillation results as the eye perceives the separate touches of colour and at the same time struggles to fuse these touches into a solid colour surface.\textsuperscript{132} This vibration effects the scintillating and shimmering atmospheric quality that characterizes the neoimpressionist canvas.

Although Pénéon's "Les Impressionistes" article does not cite the several texts that provided Seurat with his understanding of light and colour, (Blanc's, \textit{Artistes de mon temps}, and \textit{Grammaire des arts du dessin}; David Sutter's "\textit{Phénomènes de la vision}"; Ogden Rood's, \textit{Théorie Scientifique des couleurs}),\textsuperscript{133} the emphasis given to the detailed analysis of light and colour, and the references to scientific theories in this, and other articles by Pénéon on the neoimpressionist painters,\textsuperscript{134} underlines the way in which the art of Seurat, Signac, the Pissarros and their circle was seen as a reform\textsuperscript{135} of the more intuitive approach to light and colour of the orthodox impressionists, and more, in accord with the scientific nature of the modern age.\textsuperscript{136}

Although Vincent's contacts and interests in Paris are difficult to document,\textsuperscript{137} he was by his own account intrigued by
the lighter palette and emphasis on pure colour that was the common denominator of both orthodox impressionism, and neoimpressionism. He thus writes to the English artist Levens, in letter 459a, (c. August-October, 1886),

In Antwerp I did not even know what the impressionists were, now I have seen them and though not one of the club yet, I have admired certain impressionists' pictures—Degas' nude figure—Claude Monet—landscape.

And now for what regards what I myself have been doing, I have lacked money for paying models else I had entirely given myself to figure painting. But I have made a series of colour studies in painting, simply flowers...—seeking oppositions of blue with orange, red and green, yellow and violet seeking les tons rompus et neutres to harmonize brutal extremes. Trying to render intense colour and not a gray harmony.

A year later, Vincent was to recall to his sister, Wilhelmina in letter W1, (summer or fall, 1887), his efforts to abandon the gray and brown values that had dominated his palette prior to his arrival in Paris.

Last summer I painted hardly anything but flowers in order to get accustomed to using a scale of colours other than gray—namely pink, soft and vivid green, light blue, violet, yellow, orange, rich red.

Vincent's flower studies executed over the summer of 1886, are numerous and varied, but show, between the spring and summer of 1886, a growing ability to work out pictorial problems within the framework of a lighter palette and a focus on pure hues. Vase with Gladoli, F.248a, (late summer, 1886), shows Vincent's
achievement in this respect. All the hues within the composition are high valued, and the foreground of vase and flowers is set off from the background by a hue contrast, rather than value contrast,\textsuperscript{141} a significant development when compared with the \textit{Bowl with Pansies}, F.244, (spring, 1886), in which value gradation are still the means whereby Vincent evokes form and space. A landscape of the early fall of 1886, shows that Vincent was able to extend his use of a lighter palette to landscape subjects with a larger compositional framework. \textit{Montmartre: Quarry}, F.230, (October, 1886), while rendered in a "low keyed predominantly gray-green scheme of tonal harmonies",\textsuperscript{142} illustrates an increasing interest in the use of higher valued hues modulated by subtle hue contrasts. Vincent's brushwork, composed of flat, short broad strokes, (and not the irregular or comma-like brushwork associated with impressionist technique of the late 1870's and early 1880's), renders the expanse of cloudy sky allowing touches of violet-gray and blue-gray pigment to modulate the yellow-gray areas of cloud, and so imply breadth, form and movement. Similarly the foreground rocks of the quarry are depicted by broad flat brush strokes. These render the shaded side of the quarry's rectangular blocks by means of a single stroke of blue-gray; the lighted sides of these blocks are rendered by a stroke of ochre or gray-pink pigment. The green of the Montmartre hillside is also depicted in terms of the variable light effects of the Parisian sky as flat touches of dark green and ochre that overlay the drab muted green of the grassy incline, imply subtle nuances of light and shadow.\textsuperscript{143}
In the spring of 1887, Vincent begins to explore the use of high valued and pure hues in conjunction with a systematic brushstroke that reflects his exploration of neoimpressionist technique. There are several factors that probably led Vincent to develop his art in this direction. Vincent was probably made aware of the art of the neoimpressionists via the Rue Lafitte exhibit in the spring of 1886, or the second exhibit of the Société des Artistes Indépendantes, held from the 21 August to the 21 September, 1886. Several articles in Paris periodicals in 1886, also would have introduced Vincent to aspects of the new impressionism. His interest in colour laws and the special properties of complementary colour relationships that was already well formed in Nuenen must have played a role in drawing Vincent both to the new art that relied heavily on complementary colour effects, and to the artists who espoused the new colour theories. Although it is difficult to establish when Vincent came into contact with members of the neoimpressionist circle, his friendship with Camille and Lucien Pissarro, and with Signac, no doubt served to further his interest in neoimpressionism.

Vincent's View of the Kitchen Gardens at Montmartre, F.346, (early spring, 1887), and View from Vincent's Room, F.341, (early spring, 1887), appear to represent Vincent's early efforts to attack the basics of a neoimpressionist vision. These canvases share in common Vincent's apparent attempt to render form and space via small dots and dashes of high valued hues. Vincent's inadequate understanding of the principles of representation by
such means, however, is revealed most markedly by the inconsistencies of brushwork. In the View from Vincent's Bedroom, F.341, for example, thin blue lines outline the buildings in the composition, as well as such details as window frames, shutters, rooflines and chimneys. These lines define borders within which pointilist dots of pigment are applied. Similarly in View of the Kitchen Gardens at Montmartre, F.346, forms are drawn on the canvas, and objects are not evoked by the cumulative effect of a myriad of pigment touches indicating the local colour of an object, effects of light, direct and reflected, and the proximity of other objects.

By the early summer of 1887, however, Vincent reveals a developing ability to submit the size of pigment touches to the representational demands of the subject matter. In Voyer d'Argenson Park, F.314, (May, 1887), an interlaced network of pigment touches prohibits the perception of the canvas surface, a factor which had hindered the play of light and colour and the evocation of forms and space in the canvases, View of the Kitchen Gardens at Montmartre, F.346, and View from Vincent's Bedroom, F.341, of the spring of 1887. In Voyer d'Argenson Park, F.314, the pigment touches are not uniform in size, but instead systematically diminish to reinforce the perpectival representation of spatial recession. While Vincent's technique is systematic, it is not, however, the precise pointilism of Seurat's La Grande Jatte. Vincent's brushwork is composed of small dashes of pigment that tend to follow the general contours of the objects that are represented. Thus in Voyer d'Argenson Park, F.314, the dashes of pigment that denote the leaves of the park trees tend to conform to the angle
and direction of leaf growth. Similarly those that depict the colour of the paths that wind through the park are predominantly horizontal in direction. The large expanse of blue sky is composed of a mass of diagonal touches of pigment. Although Vincent's use of colour varies from the neoimpressionist's precise division of tones, many of the concerns of divisionist theory are evident in this canvas. In the left foreground of the composition the visual effects of sunlight on grass are recorded in some detail. Touches of orange pigment, alongside and overtop of touches of dark and light green pigment indicate the fall of light on the green grass. Touches of blue pigment layed alongside these orange brush strokes, add both the complementary to solar orange, and at the same time, give this foreground area its vibrancy and detail. Grass in the middle ground area of the composition that is to be perceived as at a greater distance, is rendered by means of green touches of pigment overlayed with touches of yellow and orange. The lack of any complementary hue in this area, and predominance of hues close together on the hue circle effects the less detailed and vibrant quality of an area viewed from a distance. A similar use of strong hue contrasts in the foreground that diminish and are replaced by small interval contrasts in the middle and background, prevails throughout the entire composition. While Vincent is able to adjust his use of hues in this way, it should be noted that his attention to shadow effects, which according to neoimpressionist theory should be rendered as complementary to the local colour of the shaded object with attention at the same time given to the reflected light from nearby objects, is minimal. While a
bluish-gray shadow is cast by the orange parasol and vermillion dress of the seated woman in the left middle ground of the composition: the shadows cast by the trees that stand isolated on the grass are indicated only by the absence of yellow and orange pigment touches. As only the diminution of sunlight is thus observed, the green local colour of the grass is able to dominate the shaded area. Although in View from Montmartre, F.316, (summer, 1887), Vincent's brushwork—dashes of pigment that diminish in size to indicate spatial recession—is substantially different to the more restrained brushwork in Voyer d'Argenson Park, F.314, hue contrast is used in a similar way. In foreground areas complementary touches of pigment are laid side by side to give both vibrancy and detail to the grass, flowers, and fences. Both the size of these pigment touches and the frequency of complementary contrasts diminish to indicate spatial recession. 

Vincent appears to have deliberately attacked various compositional problems so as to master the representation of light and colour by this new technique. Wheatfield with Lark, F.310, (summer, 1887), a landscape in which cut wheat occupies the foreground, and standing wheat the middle ground, is an example. In this composition, the canvas is divided into three horizontal bands that represent the area of cut wheat, the row of standing wheat, and the sky above. The use of large pigment touches in the foreground that diminish gradually to indicate spatial recession is made impossible because of the need to depict the short cut wheat with small brushstrokes and the standing wheat with larger brushstrokes. Vincent's convincing representation of this
difficult subject, and his similar success with other deliberately awkward compositions such as park studies which explore problems such as a shaded foreground, and lighted middle or background, indicate the degree to which Vincent absorbed the principles of representation by means of hue contrast, and his ability to re-create light effects by pigment touches that detail local colour, the effect of sunlight and the induced complementaries and reflections that effect the perception of shaded areas.

Vincent's approach to colour and technique was radically altered by his contact in Paris with the art of the Japanese print. In Paris, Vincent began a large collection of Japanese prints, many of which were selected from the large number of prints acquired by the art deal, Bing. As well, he arranged an exhibit of Japanese prints held at the Café Tambourin in the spring of 1887. Vincent was also in fairly close contact during 1886-1887 with two artists, Emile Bernard and Louis Anquetin, who were attracted to the flat simplified colour areas, simplified forms and contours, and avoidance of transient light effects in the Japanese print. In conjunction with their study of medieval stained glass windows and the Images d'Epinal of folk art—other forms that expressed abstract and symbolic forms through simplified line and colour—Bernard and Anquentin evolved a painting style that emphasized simplified dark contour lines that bounded flat areas of bright colour. While Vincent was to reveal his attraction to Bernard and Anquentin's art later in Arles, his early assimilation of formal aspects of the Japanese print at this time does not so radically supplant
his use of colour developed through 1886 and 1887, that rendered nuances of light and colour. Over the spring and summer of 1887, Vincent painted three reproductions of Japanese prints, and two portraits of Père Tanguy, F.363 and F.364 (autumn, 1887), that in their incorporation of specific Japanese motifs with Japanese prints on the wall behind Père Tanguy, show Vincent's interest in evoking an overall Japanese effect. The painter, A.S. Hartrick, who knew Vincent during his years in Paris, has suggested that Vincent was greatly attracted at this time to the "wrinkled paper" effect of the Japanese prints, and attempted to recreate this particular characteristic by means of a striatory brushstroke that gave a rough surface effect to the canvas. As Orton has pointed out, Romans Parisiens, F.359, (autumn, 1887), and The Italian Woman, F.381, (end 1887, or January, 1888), show a surface texture created by a criss-cross system of horizontal and vertical brushstrokes that in conjunction with an emphasis on more intense and uniform colour surfaces, seems to correspond to Hartrick's description of Vincent's attempt to capture an effect derived from Japanese prints. In this context, the dashes of pigment used to render the form of Père Tanguy in Portrait of Père Tanguy, F.363, that initially appear to resemble Vincent's variant of a neoimpressionist brushwork, may also reflect an effort to recreate the wrinkled paper effect of the Japanese prints. However, in the avoidance of detailed colour and light analysis that had characterized earlier neoimpressionist inspired canvases of 1887, Vincent's use of blue-white dashes of pigment over the blue jacket
of Père Tanguy, seem more an effort to recreate an effect of a solid colour area akin to those characteristic of the Japanese print. That Vincent may have had such an effect in mind is suggested by his depiction of the Japanese prints on the wall behind Père Tanguy, where a solid colour background is overlayed with dashes of a closely related hue of a lower or higher value. Thus while aspects of a neoimpressionist technique—predominantly the brushwork of superimposed dashes of pigment—are retained, the effort to implement the simplified areas of colour of the Japanese print replaces the concern with the detailed analysis of light and shadow effects.

It is significant that Vincent asserts while in Arles that "impressionist painters" (a term Vincent uses to refer to both orthodox impressionists and to neoimpressionists), 173 had felt the influence of the Japanese print, and that Japanese art was therefore taking root in France. 174 Vincent, in these statements is referring primarily to the influence of the bright clear colours of the Japanese print on the palette of these artists. 175 As will be shown in the following chapter, Vincent's concern with exaggerated colour is important to the canvases executed in Arles. It is in the spring and summer of 1888 at Arles that the influence of the exaggerated colour effects of the Japanese print is synthesized with the influence of two artists, Delacroix and Monticelli, whom Vincent saw as exploring the possibilities of exaggerated and expressive colours. The result is that Vincent's concern with the details of light and colour of an impressionist vision is effectively transformed and replaced.
CHAPTER III

THE MOVEMENT TOWARD EXAGGERATED COLOUR AT ARLES

Vincent arrived in Arles at the end of February, 1886, and letters of the spring of 1888 record his enthusiasm for the bright colours and clear atmosphere of the south. Significantly, Vincent saw these effects as best rendered in terms of exaggerated colours, and especially by means of the hue contrasts and complementary contrasts, that had occupied him in Nuenen, and in Paris, and which Vincent sees as essential to modern painting. There are several major influences that are important to Vincent's art at this time, and which Vincent directly associates with the exaggerated colour effects that he seeks to achieve in his painting.

As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the desire to see the intense colours of the countryside around Arles in terms of the flat and exaggerated colours of the Japanese prints, pervade Vincent's letters to Theo and Bernard through the spring of 1888. The orchard canvases to which Vincent devoted himself in April and May of 1888 are in part a manifestation of this Japanese vision. Like Hiroshige's blossoming plum trees which Vincent had copies while in Paris, certain of these orchard canvases provide a focus for an exploration of the simplified and exaggerated colours and line. In his second letter
written to Bernard from Arles, B3, (9 April, 1888), Vincent explains his working method in these terms. Referring to his work on a current canvas, Orchard Surrounded by Cypresses, F.513, Vincent explains,

Tout en travaillant toujours directement sur place, je cherche à saisir dans le dessin ce qui est essentiel—puis les espaces, limités par des contours, exprimés ou mais sentis, dans tous les cas, je les remplis de tons simplifiés également, dans ce sens que tout ce qui sera terrain participera d'un même ton violacé, que tout le ciel aura une tonalité bleu, que les verdures seront ou bien des verts-bleus ou bien des verts-jaunes, exagérant à dessein les qualités jaunes ou bleues dans ce cas.

Enfin, mon cher copain, pas de trompe-l'œil en tout cas.

(B3)

That this emphasis on contours and simplified areas of a single hue is associated with Japanese art, is made clear when the passage above is juxtaposed with an observation made to Bernard in letter B6, (c. 24 June, 1888), in reference to Vincent's consideration of the possibility of applying hues to the canvas that are unmixed, and come straight from the tube. To justify this radical use of unmodified pigment Vincent argues,

...et remarque que je parle de la simplification de la couleur à la japonais...
...Car le Japonnais fait abstraction du reflet, posant des teintes plates l'une à côté de l'autre, des traits caractéristiques arrêtant des mouvements ou des formes.

(B6)

In the canvas Orchard Surrounded with Cypresses, F.513, comparatively simplified areas of colour are achieved by means of Vincent's loose system of overlapping dashes of pigment that tend to blend together on the canvas surface. For example, the
violet soil that surrounds the flowering trees in both the fore and middle ground of the composition is overpainted with small strokes of pale yellow pigment, that blend and mix with the violet impasto. In comparison to the effect produced in a work such as View from Montmartre, F.316, where contrasting hues were applied by means of clearly separated brushstrokes, this blending of brushstrokes in Orchard Surrounded by Cypresses, F.513, evokes a more uniform colour area. The yellow reed fence—the separate reeds indicated by a single vertical orange line—is also able to be read as a single colour area, and in conjunction with the large expanse of blue sky, affirms Vincent's description of this canvas to Bernard in letter B3, (9 April, 1888), as exhibiting clearly defined colour areas, wherein colour and light effects are simplified and share the same tone. In describing this same canvas to Theo, Vincent had written in letter 470, (18 March, 1888),

Je voulais arriver à y mettre des couleurs comme dans les vitraux et un dessin à lignes fermes.

(470)

While Vincent's efforts to achieve large areas of simplified and exaggerated colour are reasserted in this statement, the reference to colour effects like those in stained glass windows, seems an obvious allusion to the simplified colour and design sought by Bernard and Anquentin in 1887, that was derived from the simplified forms and colours found in the Japanese print, stained glass windows, and Images d'Epinal. This allusion then, suggests Vincent's own identification with such efforts to attain bold and
simple design and colour effects. Vincent's response to his own canvas, Le Pont de l'Anglois, F.397, reasserts this aim. In letter 479,(c. 24-27 April, 1888), Le Pont de l'Anglois, F.397, is described as,

...une étude où les terrains sont orange vif, l'herbe tres verte, le ciel et l'eau bleu.

This description of simple and bright colour contrasts corresponds to the overall effect of this canvas that depicts women washing at a river bank beside a stone causeway and wooden drawbridge that span the composition horizontally. Blue, similar in intensity and varying only slightly in tint, describes both the expanse of sky that acts as backdrop to the scene, and the river that flows out from under the Pont de l'Anglois. The horizontal blue, white, orange, and yellow brushstrokes that render the ripples and reflections on the river surface do not diminish the colour similarity between two areas. The sense of colour exaggeration created by these two large areas of intense blue is added to by two areas of orange and orange-yellow within the composition. The foreground path that borders the river is rendered in small brushstrokes that blend an orange and yellow impasto. The contours that define the wooden superstructure of the drawbridge are filled in with a flat orange and yellow. While these colour exaggerations are logical to Vincent—he explains in letter B6, (c. 24 June, 1888): "Pas de bleu sans jaune et sans orangé, et si vous faits le bleu, faites donc le jaune, l'orangé aussi, n'est-ce pas"—the intense colours and clearly defined contours in Le Pont
l'Anglois, F.317, lead Vincent to observe in letter 500, (c. 23 June, 1888), following a discussion of the influence of the Japanese print on Bernard and Anquetin, that, "Le pont de l'Anglais' pourraient aller à Anquetin". This remark again asserts Vincent's awareness of his own movement toward simplified and exaggerated colour and design that is inspired in part by the influence of the Japanese print.

Vincent's movement toward exaggerated colour at Arles is not solely based upon the influence of the Japanese print, or the directions pursued by contemporaries like Bernard and Anquetin. In letter 477a, (20 or 21 April, 1888), written to the artist John Russell, Vincent remarks that he is studying the same scenery that once inspired the painter Adolphe Monticelli, an artist who spent a major portion of his life painting in Marseilles, and who died in poverty in 1886.

Witnessing the very scenery that inspired Monticelli...surely Monticelli gives us not, neither pretends to give us, local colour, or even local truth. But gives us something passionate and eternal—the rich colour and rich sun of the glorious South in a true colourist way parallel with Delacroix's conception of the South viz. that the South be represented now by contraste simultané of colours and their derivations and harmonies and not by forms and lines in themselves....

(477a)

Vincent's admiration for the work of this artist, stems from the Paris period, where he was introduced to the work of Monticelli by Alexander Reid, who was a collector of Monticelli's work, and by Theo, who owned several Monticelli's at this time. The similarity of many of Vincent's flower studies in the summer of
1886, to Monticelli's still life's—particularly in the emphasis of pure colour and the use of a thick impasto and loaded brush that is able to blend in a single brushstroke the subtle nuances and blends of hue pigments—reflects Vincent's attraction to Monticelli's work. In the letter to Russell cited above, Vincent links Monticelli to Delacroix, the artist whom Vincent had admired since his introduction to the colour laws by Charles Blanc in 1884. This association no doubt arises as Monticelli's use of pure hues and a rich impasto was interpreted by Vincent as a response to southern light and colour, in much the same way that Delacroix's approach to colour and ensuing use of strong colour contrasts was understood as altered radically by a visit to North Africa. Vincent compares Monticelli and Delacroix as colourists specifically because of their similar avoidance of local colour in favour of intense and exaggerated colour effects. While Vincent's English syntax is such that it is difficult to discern whether he is speaking of Delacroix and Monticelli—or of present day artists—when he observes that, "the South be represented now by contraste simultanée of colours and their derivations and harmonies", the implication is that both artists were aware of such principles and used them in their depiction of southern light and colour. Vincent's assertion at the end of this passage that the south will continue to be rendered in colour with the advantage of, "the more universal knowledge we have and possess of the prism and their properties", attests to his continued fascination with colour relationships of contrast and harmony.
Throughout the spring and early summer of 1888, Vincent makes frequent reference to Monticelli and Delacroix as artists who exaggerate their hues to capture the intensity and brilliance of the southern sun. It is important to emphasize that for Vincent this interest in the exaggerated colour of these two artists, does not preclude or diminish an effort to assimilate the simplified and exaggerated colour effects of the Japanese print into his art. As opposed to the art of Delacroix and Monticelli as the Japanese print may initially seem, it appears that for Vincent they shared important features in common. As art forms that exhibit the use of intense hues and exaggerated colour effects all three were considered able by Vincent to capture the character and quality of light and colour of the south. Thus, in letter 500, (23 June, 1888), Vincent can intimate that his effort to achieve exaggerated colour in Arles is associated with his admiration of an artist such as Delacroix whose colour moved toward more exaggerated contrasts following his stay in Africa, and a few sentences later, associate the colours of Arles, and by implication his own painting, with the colour of Japanese prints.

...je ressens tout à fait l'importance qu'il y a de rester dans le midi, et de sentir qu'il faut encore outrer la couleur davantage—l'Afrique pas loin de soi.... Pour ce qui est rester dans le midi... voyons: on aime la peinture japonaise, on en a subi l'influence, tous les impressionistes ont ça en commun, et on m'irait pas au Japon, c'est-à dire ce que est l'équivalent du Japon, le midi? Je crois donc qu'encore après tout l'avenir de l'art nouveau est dans le midi. (500)
There is another influence on Vincent's movement toward the implementation of exaggerated effects in his art that emerges in the spring of 1888. In letter 470, (18 March, 1888), Vincent writes to Theo that he is currently reading Guy de Maupassant's novel, *Pierre et Jean*. He adds,

...as-tu lu la préface, expliquant la liberté qu'a l'artiste d'exagérer, de créer une nature plus belle, plus simple, plus consolante dans un roman....

(470)

de Maupassant's "preface" to *Pierre et Jean* is in effect a literary manifesto entitled, "Le Roman", that repudiates the detailed and documented analysis of the novels of Zola and Hugo. de Maupassant argues in favour of a more personalized view of reality in which the multitude of facts and actions that comprise day to day reality are not documented in detail, but selected and ordered in terms of the artist's viewpoint or theme. To de Maupassant, such a method is able to evoke an image of reality that is more in line with human perception, that tends to select and order experiences and events to create a personal "illusion du monde". The writer's duty, then, is to remove trivial incident from his depiction and to amplify and to set in a special light, "les événements essentiels et à donner a tous les autres le degré de relief qui leur convenient, suivant leur importance pour produire la sensation profonde de la vérité spéciale qu'on veut montrer". To accomplish this de Maupassant advocates a simplified syntax pared down to a single verb and a single adjective. This elimination of extraneous description is to allow a combination
of simple and basic phrases to create their own rhythm and to reinforce stylistically the nature of the artist's presentation. de Maupassant's paring down of reality to all but the essential aspects of theme, and his insistence that salient but less obvious aspects of theme and structure must be exaggerated, recalls immediately the focus of Bernard and Anquentin, in Paris in 1887, and corresponds to Vincent's focus in the spring of 1888. This similarity of aesthetic theory no doubt plays some role in Vincent's interest in the "préface". It is interesting to note that Vincent's discussion of de Maupassant's advocation of exaggeration, is in fact the first reference made in Arles to exaggeration as an artistic aim. When, in later weeks Vincent outlines his efforts to exaggerate particular effects in his work, his comments correspond to many of the points raised by de Maupassant. For example, in letter 490, (26 May, 1888), Vincent writes: "Je cherche maintenant à exagérer l'essentiel, à laisser dans le vague exprès le banal". This statement recalls de Maupassant's recommendation that trivial incidents be eliminated and the artist's main focus that reveals the character of the subject be amplified. A closer dependance on de Maupassant's phrasing may be seen in letter 500, (23 June, 1888). Here Vincent follows his remark on the necessity of remaining in the south and exaggerating colours, and his observation that the midi is the equivalent to Japan, with a comment on the ability of photographic accuracy in art to capture the essence of reality.
...le dessin, la couleur juste, n'est pas peut-être l'essentiel qu'il faut chercher, car le reflet de la réalité dans le miroir, si c'était possible de le fixer avec couleur et tout, ne serait aucunement un tableau, pas davantage qu'une photographie.

(500)
de Maupassant in the "préface" to Pierre et Jean had also remarked on the inability of photographic reality to reflect the human perspective, and it was for this reason that he advocated exaggeration of aspects essential to the artist's focus.

Le réaliste, s'il est un artiste, cherchera, non pas à nous montrer la photographie banale de la vie, mais à nous en donner la vision plus complète, plus saisissante, plus probante que la réalité même.211

Already in Nuenen, in letter 402, (last week of April, 1885), Vincent had argued that reality was not, "literal truth, namely exact drawing and local colour". In letter 418, (July, 1885), he had asserted that academic correctness, even a photograph of a subject, is not able to capture reality.

If one photographs a digger, he certainly would not be digging then...for me Millet and Lhermitte are the real artists for the very reason that they do not paint things as they are, traced in a dry analytical way, but as they...feel them....my great longing is to learn to make those very incorrectnesses, those deviations, remodellings, changes in reality, so that they may become, yes, lies if you like—but truer than the literal truth.

(418)
de Maupassant's insistence, then, on the artist's interpretation of reality is not new to Vincent. However, the author's concurrence with Vincent's own views concerning the avoidance of detailed transcription of visual reality, his advocation of simplification
and exaggeration at a time when these terms would have a special significance for Vincent, and his call for a new literature to replace the old documentary realism of Hugo and Zola, seems to account for Vincent's ensuing use of de Maupassant as a symbol for a new order in literary art. In turn, this leads Vincent to call for a similar revolution in the art of painting. In two letters of the spring and summer of 1888, de Maupassant's achievement in literature, is specifically related to Claude Monet's achievement in landscape. Presumably the writer's concept of a simplified style, intended to reinforce the artist's amplification of elements essential to his theme, seemed to Vincent to parallel Monet's use of colour and brushwork to capture his view of colour and atmospheric effects in nature. The association between the two artists made by Vincent, may also stem from his realization that Monet's art that exaggerated particular aspects of vision had revolutionized painting in the same way that de Maupassant intended to revolutionize the traditional novel. Thus in letter 482, (3 or 4 May, 1888), Vincent writes,

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Mais... serais dis-je, rudement content, si en peinture il nous venait un homme à la Guy de Maupassant pour peindre gaiement les belles gens et choses d'ici....mais ce que Claude Monet est dans le paysage, cela dans la figure peinte, qui est-ce qui fera cela? Pourtant tu dois sentir comme moi que cela est dans l'air....Mais le peinture de l'avenir c'est un coloriste comme il m'y en a pas encore eu.
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(482)
Again in letter 525, (15 August, 1888), Vincent writes,

> J'aime mieux attendre la génération à venir, qui fera en portrait ce que Claude Monet fait en paysage, le paysage riche et crème à la Guy de Maupassant.

(525)

While both these passages underline Vincent's interest in figure painting and the portrait, they also emphasize his belief in an art of colour, and his sense that future art will be able to explore new avenues of colour expression.

In May and June of 1888 with the flowering of the fruit trees over, Vincent's painted subject matter—drawn primarily from the landscape around Arles—reflects his efforts to implement simplified and exaggerated colour and light effects in his work. In View with Irises, F.409, described in letters 487, (c. 12 May, 1888), and B5, (c. 19 May, 1888), several methods of rendering intense colour and light are used throughout the composition. The landscape is a diagonal view of a ditch of tall, green-stemmed irises that border a large field of mowed and standing buttercups. An alley of trees runs horizontally across the canvas behind this yellow field; roof tops and church steeples of the town of Arles are visible in the distance under an expanse of turquoise blue sky. Long vertical strokes of varied greens indicate the tall stalks and leaves of the foreground irises, and touches of purple and lilac indicate the petals of the flower heads. The stalks, leaves, and petals of each plant are delineated roughly with thin contour lines of blue-black pigment giving a linear emphasis that isolates and defines the individual forms. Although the flowers
and leaves were no doubt delineated in this way after the application of colour areas to the canvas, the effect is the opposite and the contours appear to have been drawn first and then filled in by solid areas of colour. In marked contrast to this foreground area that seems a technical response to Vincent's observation expressed in letter 495, (9 June, 1888): "Les choses d'ici ont tant de style", the field of buttercups behind is depicted by small regular touches of pigment and therefore rendered by colour alone. In letter B5, (c. 19 May, 1888), Vincent notes that the field of buttercups was in the process of being mowed while he painted. To render the mowed area of this field, light and dark green pigment touches are applied over top of a flat yellow-gold ground. These pigment touches diminish radically in size in the area of standing buttercups behind, and the touches of yellow-gold pigment that indicate the field of flowers, predominates. Impastoed touches of white-violet pigment are layed alongside the touches of green in both the mown and flowered areas of the field, suggesting the impact of vibrant light and colour, as well as unifying the two areas. The most distant parts of the yellow field are rendered by an impasto that works together both yellow and green. The textured surface of this thick paint allows the vibrant quality effected by the touches of violet-white in the closer areas of the field to be retained; at the same time this technique suggests objects and areas perceived at a greater distance as the more detailed rendition of light and colour conveyed by the varied touches of pigment in the foreground is replaced
by a single colour area. The line of trees and distant city
are delineated in a blue-black pigment (as with the foreground
irises this bounding contour is probably a secondary addition),
and comparatively flat areas of colour—orange, reds and neutral
grays—are given the appearance of filling in these contours.
The solid colour of the turquoise sky is given a vibrant quality
by an irregular brushwork that textures the impastoed surface.
The multitude of ridges and peaks in the pigment surface impart
an effect similar to that of the small touches of white-violet
impasto that suggest the vibrant effect of sunlight on the field
below.

Although the View with Irises, F.409, was not the finished
picture that Vincent had hoped to achieve, a comparison with
the landscape study, Farm Among Cornfields, F.408, that is also
described in letter 487, (c. 12 May, 1888), illustrates the degree
to which colour and light effects have been simplified and
exaggerated in Vincent's work. In the canvas, Farm Among Corn-
fields, F.408, a small white house with red roof stands in the
centre of the composition, dwarfed by the green field in front of
it, the large trees that line the side of a road, and by the blue
sky with clouds overhead. In terms of colour, Vincent in this
composition has rendered nuances of light, shade, and ensuing
colour modifications. The gray trunk of the large tree is mod-
ulated by single strokes of subdued reds, yellows and blues; the
leaves are rendered by an underpaint of green over top of which is
applied pointilist touches of orange, blue, dark green and ochre.
Similarly the green field is depicted by small vertical strokes of dark and light greens, ochres, and grayed variations and combinations of these colours; the sky is made hazy by a large expanse of yellow-white cloud, and modulated and flecked with patches of blue. These delicate colour modulations deny both simplicity of colour effects in a given area, and as well detract from colour intensity. The detailed brushwork that renders these variations similarly contradicts both simplification and exaggeration.

The Harvest, F.412, described first in letters 496, (12 June, 1888), 497, (12 or 13 June, 1888), and 498, (c. 15 or 16 June, 1888), explores a different means of expressing intense colour. The scene is observed from an elevated viewpoint which affords a vista of flat patchwork fields which recede into the distance, up to a line of low foothills. Except for the foreground of this composition where short dashes of pigment render the grass and fences that enclose small evergreen trees and a large haystack, the clear light and intense colour that characterize the receding fields, and the buildings scattered on them, is expressed by areas of colour rendered with a minimum of brushwork, impasto, or hue or value variations. The sky above this scene is rendered in flat colour with no variation of hue or texture. This emphasis of flat colours is reinforced by the clear contours that define the forms of farm buildings, hay carts, and the foothills in the distance. The fields on the flat plain assume a grid-like character as they are clearly delineated by borders of small green
trees, or a thin blue line that suggests a bordering pathway.
The clearly defined forms and simplified and flat areas of colour
in this composition obviously pleased Vincent. In letter 497,
(12 or 13 June, 1888), he remarks: "La dernière toile (The Harvest,
F.412), tue absolument tout le reste, il n'y a qu'une nature
morte avec des cafetières et des tasses et assiettes en bleu et
jaune, qui se tienne à côté". In letter 498, (c. 15 or 16 June,
1888), Vincent reasserts that The Harvest, F.412, kills all his
previous works with the exception of a canvas of a still life.
"La Moisson....c'est le motif auquel j'ai travaillé cette semaine
...ça me tue le reste que j'ai, à l'exception d'une nature morte
travaillée avec patience". In these letters Vincent compares his
canvas to a still life of blue and yellow cups and saucers,
Still Life with Blue Coffee Pot, F.16. A brief examination of
this canvas reveals aspects of Vincent's working method in The
Harvest, F.412. The Still Life with Blue Coffee Pot, F.416, is
described to Theo in letter 489, (c. 19 May, 1888), and to Bernard
in B5, (c. 19 May, 1888); in both letters a sketch of the canvas
is included as well. Vincent emphasizes in both descriptions
that the composition is based on combinations of blues and orange-
yellows.219 The objects in this still life are clearly delineated
in the two sketches in the letters to Theo and Bernard, and in
Vincent's canvas of the subject this emphasis of contours is
retained. The way colour groupings are juxtaposed reinforce this
emphasis of form. All the objects of the still life are set upon
a pale blue tablecloth and against a pale yellow, or citron green
background. In this way the forms of the blue enamel coffee pot and royal blue cup and saucer stand out clearly, as do the three yellow lemons set in front of the blue coffee pot and the orange set behind the blue cup and saucer and against the yellow background. The careful arrangement of objects so that contrasting hues are set one against the other is maintained throughout the composition. The pale cobalt and white checked milk jug contrasts with the pale citron green background against which it is set, and with the dark blue of the enamel coffee pot, the spout of which is placed slightly in front of the jug. The cup decorated in orange and blue is placed in a yellow saucer, and set against the green, brown, and pink majolica jug. The areas of solid colour, rendered by a comparatively smooth brushwork and a fairly thick pigment, reinforce the delineation of forms by clear contour lines. Stylistically this canvas probably derives from Bernard's cloisonist still life in blue and yellow of 1887, and so reflects Vincent's interest in the well defined contours and solid areas of colour of Bernard's and Anquentin's art of 1887. Still, the movement toward more solid areas of colour, evidenced in this canvas, rather than areas built up from a multitude of separate brushstrokes and touches of pigment, is important to the evolution of Vincent's simplified and exaggerated colour. To apply such flat colours to the deep space of a landscape is difficult. In The Harvest, F.412, the problem is in part solved by the level landscape itself, an effect that is furthered by the high horizon that serves to tip up and flatten the landscape,
allowing a greater emphasis to be given to the surface pattern of the fields. These fields as has been pointed out already, are rendered by uniform areas of colour that accent the linear divisions. The scattered farm buildings are also rendered in terms of simplified colour areas. The sunlit sides are a solid white, the roofs are orange, and the shaded sides of the buildings are exaggerated to a solid blue that clearly sets off the form of the structures from the expanse of yellow fields that surround them. This flat blue ties in with other small areas of blue within the composition—the unlit side of the foreground fence, the blue cart in the centre of the composition, a small figure and blue cart crossing the level plain, farther off in the distance and finally the slopes of the hills on the horizon. The red-orange of the roofs are repeated through the composition in a similar way, articulating the sunlit side of the foreground fence, and defining a two wheel cart in the middle ground and setting it off from the citron field. In the distance across the plain, this orange is repeated in the roofs of the farm houses, and is barely discernible in the distant slopes of Mount Majour. These hues, used throughout the various distances of the composition, undergo only the slightest variation in intensity, and support the emphasis of flat intense colour, unvarying light and well defined forms, that the canvas as a whole presents. The band of sky, which Vincent describes in letter 497, (12 or 13 June, 1888), as,"l'azure verte...chauffé à blanc", is rendered as a large expanse of flat colour, unvaried in hue, value or texture, and similarly adds to the impact of flat unmodulated colour.
In Vincent's following canvases of June, 1888, the movement toward juxtapositions of intense hues and hue variations, and the manipulation of larger areas of solid or uniform colour—either flat or impastoed—becomes a major compositional device. Common to these works is that the emphasis given to contour and flat intense colour throughout an entire composition, as in the *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, F.410, and *The Harvest*, F.412, is not repeated in other works, a tendency which arises more than likely from the ability of intense uniform colours, and colour contrasts to define their own contours. In *The Wheatfield*, F.411, for example, the vista takes in foreground grass and flowers, a long yellow field that is bordered to the right of the viewer by tall cypresses and to the left by a narrow strip of a green field. Against the horizon is a line of trees with one red roofed farm building, and behind, low blue foothills. Above is a narrow band of turquoise sky. The focus in this composition is close up and eye level. In direct opposition to the tilted up, almost concave panoramic view of *The Harvest*, F.412, this view causes the foreground to be rendered in detail and the landscape to curve away, down toward the horizon. The wide band of grass and flowers in the foreground of the composition is rendered by juxtaposed strokes and dashes of pigment that manipulate various hue contrasts. A row of grass is depicted in neutral browns, ochre, and a pale red-orange, but highlighted by a row of short grasses composed of intense blue-violet and green strokes of pigment. Behind, short dashes of high valued hues—light turquoise green, orange, pale lilac, and a high valued yellow—are layed side by side and over-
lapped, and give the effect of a mass of various grasses, individually perceived, bent in the wind. These pigment touches merge with orange and intense yellow touches that are laid over the yellow impasto of the wheatfield. No delineating contours (as in the View with Irises, F.409), are needed to give this foreground area of grass detail or vibrant impact, as grasses are defined by varied hue contrasts. In a similar way, the division between areas such as that between the foreground grass and the field of wheat behind is also defined by a hue contrast. In this case the yellow of the wheatfield contrasts with a narrow band of lilac pigment touches that are applied to the border of the foreground grass area. The remainder of the composition features more simplified colour areas. A dark green impasto depicts the cypresses that stand to the right of the wheatfield and a flat olive green depicts the fields to the left of the central yellow cornfield. The low blue-violet mountains on the horizon are rendered in terms of flat colour, as is the turquoise sky above.

Vincent's concern with obtaining exaggerated colour effects is reinforced by a week long visit to the coastal village of Saintes Maries in mid June, 1888. In letter 500, (23 June, 1888), written while in Saintes Maries, Vincent observes to Theo the importance of remaining in the south of France, "et de sentir qu'il faut encore outrer la couleur davantage....". To Bernard, in letter B6, (c. 24 June, 1888), written shortly after his return from the coastal village, Vincent describes several theoretical motifs in terms of juxtapositions of flat simplified colours,
arguing that, "le Japonais fait abstration du reflet, posant des teintes plates l'une à côté de l'autre, des traits caractéristiques arrêtant des mouvements ou des formes". Vincent describes two motifs, a cottage against a yellow sky, and a cottage on an orange field, to show how such simplified colours may be altered further by the artist to accentuate the complementaries that are called forth by the various hues of the southern sky.

...lorsqu'on compose un motif de couleurs exprimant par exemple un ciel jaune du soir, le blanc cru et dur d'un mur blanc contre le ciel à la rigeur s'exprime, et d'une façon étrange, par le blanc cru rabattu par un ton neutre, car le ciel même le colore d'un ton lilas fin. Encore dans ce paysage si naïf lequel est sensé, nous représenter une cabane blanchie entièrement à la chaux (le toit aussi), posée sur un terrain orangé certes, car le ciel du midi et la méditerranée bleue, provoquent un orangé d'avant plus intense que la gamme des bleues est plus montée de ton....

The passage here furthers a statement made at the close of letter 500, (23 June, 1888), written from Sainte-Marie in which Vincent had cited Pissarro's advice concerning the manipulation of colour effects.

Ce que dit Pissarro est vrai, il faudrait hardiment exagérer les effets que produisent par leurs accords ou leurs désaccords, les couleurs.

Significantly, Vincent follows this statement with the observation referred to earlier in this chapter.

...le dessin, la couleur juste, n'est pas peut-être l'essentiel qu'il faut chercher, car le reflet de la réalité dans le miroir, si c'était possible de le fixer avec couleur et tout, ne serait aucunement un tableau, pas davantage qu'une photographie.
The suggestion in this passage is that exaggeration of colour (and design) are able to present aspects of reality that are essential to the artist. While Vincent does not specifically link exaggerated colour harmonies and contrasts with emotive properties at this time — the link is made some weeks later, in letter 520, (11 August, 1888) — this merging of Vincent's disdain for photographic reality with a concern with not only exaggerated and simplified colours, but exaggeration of colour harmonies and contrasts, foreshadows the concern with suggestive properties of colour that is crucial to Vincent's art through the late summer and early fall of 1888.
It is at the end of June, 1888, that Vincent embarks upon several canvases that lead him from a discussion of exaggerated colour, to a consideration of the suggestive or expressive properties of colour. The Sower, F.422, first described in letters B7, (c. 28 June, 1888), and 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), a portrait, The Zouave, F.423, described in letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), and a View of the Rhone from the Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426, described in letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888), are canvases conceived within a few days of each other, and as Vincent's descriptions of each indicate, are attempts to experiment with colour relationships that are expressive in themselves. It is in Vincent's references to the colour structures of these three canvases, and a canvas executed in mid August, Portrait of Patience Escalier, F.448, described in letter 520, (11 August, 1888), that an indication of how colour is to take on an expressive and suggestive role is given.

The Sower, F. 422

The composition of The Sower, F.422, is divided into three horizontal bands. The largest band that comprises almost the lower two thirds of the canvas is that of a flat field of clumps of
earth that stretches from the foreground into the middle distance. Blue-violet dashes of pigment, applied over a brown and violet ground, cover this field. Smaller touches of orange and white-violet pigment are superimposed over the blue-violet dashes. A narrow band of standing wheat runs horizontally across the canvas behind the field of sods, and is rendered with vertical brushstrokes and a thick gold pigment. The third horizontal band is that of the yellow sky, with a large yellow setting sun in its centre, the lower rim of which has already disappeared behind the wheat. The sky is gold and flecked with dashes of gold, green, and yellow pigment that emanate in a ray-like pattern from the rim of the yellow sun. The sower is set on the blue-violet field to one side of the sun. He strides diagonally across the field casting seed from a sack slung over his shoulder. His shirt and trousers are rendered in the same blue-violet as the field of freshly turned earth; as such he is dwarfed to some extent by the field upon which he works and the large sun behind, which occupies the centre of the composition.

In Vincent's first description of The Sower, F.422, to Theo in letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), the significance of colour to this composition is underlined.227

J'ai eu une semaine d'un travaille serré et raide dans les blés en plein soleil, il en est résulté des études de blés, paysages et—une équise de semeur.
Sur un champé labouré un grand champ de mottes de terre violettes—montant vers l'horizon un semeur en bleu et blanc. À l'horizon un champ de blé mûr court.
Sur tont cela un ciel jaune avec un soleil jaune.
Tu sens à la simple nomenclature des tonalités, que la couleur joue dans cette composition un rôle très important.

To Bernard in letter B7, (c. 28 June, 1888), Vincent follows a similar description of the canvas by observing that although The Sower, F.422, departs from truth to local colours, he has deliberately created a juxtaposition of yellow and violet. These two complementaries are mixed to give the neutral colours of the freshly turned earth in the foreground. In terms of the composition as a whole, violet predominates in the lower half of the canvas, and yellow in the upper half. The abandonment of local colour in The Sower, F.422, is in part an effort to maximize the effect of this juxtaposition of a complementary pair.

Il y a bien des rappels de jaune dans le terrain, des ton neutres résultant du mélange du violet avec le jaune; mais je me suis un peu foutu de la vérité de la couleur.

...Prenons le Semeur. Le tableau est coupé en deux, une moitié est jaune, le haut; le bas est violet. Eh bien, le pantalon blanc reposé l'œil et le distrait au moment où le contraste simultané excessif de jaune et de violet l'agaçait.

In order to understand why the juxtaposition of complementaries is important to The Sower, F.422, it is necessary to outline Vincent's references to the suggestive and expressive potential of colour during the period in which this canvas was painted. In letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888), Vincent indicates to Theo that he has retouched the canvas of The Sower, F.422, adding green to the area of yellow sky and orange to the violet soil. He adds that this motif must be painted in colour, explaining by
means of a reference to a Delacroix canvas, that colour is able to be expressive in itself.

La question demeure celle-ci—La Barque du Christ d'Eugène Delacroix et Le Semeur sont d'une facture absolument différente. La Barque du Christ—je parle de l'équisse bleue et verte avec taches violettes, rouges et un peu de jaune citron pour le nimbe, l'aureole—parle un langage symbolique par la couleur même.

Le Semeur de Millet est gris incolore, comme le sont les tableaux d'Israëls aussi. Peut-on maintenant peindre "Le Semeur" avec de la couleur, avec un contraste simultané de jaune et de violet par exemple (comme le plafond d'Apollon, qui justement est jaune et violet, de Delacroix), oui ou mon? Certes, oui.

(503)

Vincent has here described Delacroix's use of colour in the canvas, Christ on the Lake of Gennesaret of 1854, as able to speak a symbolic language by means of colour alone. To Bernard in letter B8, (c. 1 July, 1888), Vincent clarifies somewhat the emotive significance he gives to Delacroix's colour in this particular canvas.

Ah! le beau tableau d'Eug. Delacroix: La Barque du Christ sur la mer de Génésareth. Lui avec son aureole d'un pâle citron-dormant lumineux dans la tache de violet dramatique, de bleu sombre, de rouge sang du group des disciples ahuris—sur la terrible mer d'émeraude montant, montant jusque tout en haut du cadre. Ah, la géniale équisse.

(B8)

Vincent here underlines colour's ability to dramatize subject matter and to heighten the viewer's perception of the emotions involved in the depicted scene. Vincent describes the cloaks of the disciples in this Delacroix canvas as somber blue and blood
red, seemingly to indicate that by these colours the disciples' concern and fear in the midst of the stormy lake is better conveyed. The contrast of Christ's yellow halo against a violet background is described as a deliberate device that emphasizes, by means of a complementary contrast, the vibrant focal point: Christ's divinity. The emerald sea is seen as terrible as much by colour as its expanse. Vincent's response to the vast green body of water that surrounds and engulfs the boat and its occupants recognizes the ability of colour in conjunction with compositional structure to heighten the impact of the subject that the artist presents.

It is within the context of Vincent's admiration of what he sees as Delacroix's manipulation of colour to an expressive end that he argues in letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), that the motif of the sower must be painted in terms of colour.

Et pourtant après Millet et Lhermitte, ce qui reste à faire, c'est-le semeur avec de la couleur et en grand format.

Vincent greatly admired the rural and peasant subject matter of both Millet and Lhermitte. His comment, cited above, acknowledges that both artists had effectively created images that captured the character of life and environment of rural labourers. Vincent's interest in treating a subject dealt with by Millet and Lhermitte, but in terms of colour, alludes to the palettes of both artists that were based on predominantly brown and gray tonal harmonies. Rendering a sower in colour—and Vincent's figure is in fact almost directly derived from Millet's Sower of
implies, a rendition of this motif in terms of the new language of colour that Vincent sees as reflective of the modern knowledge of colour principles. However, in light of Vincent's references to Delacroix's expressive use of colour that are cited above, his enthusiasm for depicting the sower in colour suggests also that Vincent felt that colour could add another expressive level to this already significant image. In fact, some months after The Sower, F.422, was completed Vincent refers to this canvas, in letter 533, (8 September, 1888), as the first attempt in effecting, "une couleur alors pas localement vraie au point de vue réaliste du trompe l'oeil, mais une couleur suggestive d'une émotion quelconque d'ardeur de tempérament.

In attempting to discern what Vincent intended to suggest or convey by means of colour in The Sower, F.422, which as has been already pointed out, emphasizes a juxtaposition of the complementary pair, violet and yellow, two interpretations present themselves. In letter B7, (c. 28 June, 1888), in which Vincent first describes the yellow and violet juxtapositions of The Sower, F.422, as a departure from a truthfulness to local colour, he adds,

Faire des images naïves de vieil almanack plutôt, de vieil almanach de campagne où la grêle, la neige, la pluie, le beau temps, sont représentés d'une façon tout à fait primitive ainsi qu'Anquetin avait si bien trouvé sa Moisson. Je ne te cache pas que je ne déteste pas la campagne y ayant été élevé—des bouffées de souvenirs d'autrefois, des aspirations vers cet infini dont le semeur, la gerbe sont les symboles m'enchantement encore, comme autrefois.

(B7)

That Bernard and Anquetin themselves were deliberately drawing on
simplified images of the Images d'Epinal, no doubt plays a role in Vincent's discussion here of both naive images, and the symbolic motif of the sower that implies the cyclical nature of the seasons. In light of these references, however, the choice of a complementary pair would appear as an appropriate way to express the sower motif. To Vincent, complementary pairs are based on invariable colour laws, as well as basic to colour relationships and to colour perception. The juxtaposition of a complementary pair in The Sower, F.422, may be seen as an attempt to use a simple and basic colour relationship that would correspond to the naive and primitive aspects of the sower motif.

A study of Vincent's concern with colour relationships poses a second, and it is suggested here, more significant manipulation of colour in this composition. In letter B7, (c. 28 June, 1888), Vincent pointed out that in The Sower, F.422, it was intended that, "le pantalon blanc repose l'oeil et le distrait au moment où le contraste simultané excessif de jaune et de violet l'agèrait". Although Vincent had described the sower's trousers as white in this description, in the completed version of the canvas, the colouring of the sower is actually based upon the yellow-violet opposition of the composition as a whole. The trousers, shirt, and boots of the sower are violet, the figure's hat and seed bag are a deep gold or ochre, and his hands and face are a deep orange. While the violet hue of the trousers may in fact denote the effect of the reflected hue of the surrounding fields on white cloth, or the shadow effect called
forth by the yellow sun, the alteration in colouring still allows the sower to stand at a crucial point in the composition. As either a distraction and rest placed between the two complementary hues, or as a deliberate reflection of the colours used in the composition, Vincent has by a particular type of colour symbolism, stressed the inextricable ties that bind this figure to his environment. Two essential factors of the sower's environment, the earth which he tills, sows, and reaps, and the sky, the source of the weather of each season, are rendered by Vincent in terms of a complementary pair, which by definition, mutually interact and intensify one another.242 At the point of their interaction stands the sower. While Vincent had initially planned to have the white of the sower's trousers rest and distract the eye, from the interaction of the two complementaries,243 his depiction of the sower in terms of the violet and gold of the rest of the composition, underlines the concept that this figure is moulded and governed by the interaction of the elements of his environment. That this interpretation of Vincent's manipulation of the law of simultaneous contrast is close to Vincent's own approach, both to peasant subjects, and to the colour laws, may be shown by a brief analysis of two comments made by Vincent some weeks following the completion of this canvas.

In letter 520, (11 August, 1888), while referring to a recently completed portrait of a peasant subject, Portrait of Patience Escalier, F.444, Vincent explains that he has exaggerated colour elements in his depiction of the peasant because,
Vincent read Emile Zola's Germinal in the spring of 1885 while he was in Nuenen, just following his completion of the Potato Eaters, F.82; his contact with Zola's novel La Terre, may be dated to as early as 1887, when the novel was first published. Both novels focus on the effect of environment on the individual. Germinal's subject is the plight of starving coal miners, and La Terre is set in the south of France and treats the peasant workers of the soil whose lives, Zola stresses, are dictated and dependant on the cyclical nature of the seasons. To underline this inter-dependant relationship Zola opens his novel with the image of the sower rythmically striding across his fields casting out handfuls of seed. Vincent's attraction to Zola's depiction of the peasant stated in letter 520, (11 August, 1888), then would make the exaggeration of environment in The Sower, F.422, to stress its effect on the peasant, a natural emphasis.

That Vincent would be inclined to manipulate colour relationships, specifically the law of simultaneous contrast that governs the juxtaposition of complementaries, in a way that would assert the concept of the sower as effected by his environment, is supported by a reference made in letter 531, (3 September, 1888), where Vincent describes a major concern that underlies his study of colour. He writes of the study of colour

J'ai toujours l'espoir de trouver quelque chose là-dedans.
Exprimer l'amour de deux amoureux par un mariage de deux complémentaires, leur mélanges et leurs oppositions, les vibrations mystérieuses des tons rapprochés. Exprimer la pensée d'un front par le rayonnant d'un ton clair sur un fond sombre.

...Ce n'est certes pas là du trompe-l'oeil réaliste, mais n'est-ce pas une chose réellement existante?

As this passage indicates, Vincent conceives of complementary contrasts and harmonies, as able to assume an expressive role. While this letter was written during the period in which Vincent was involved with the decoration of canvases for the Yellow House, his description of *The Sower*, F.422, as the canvas that first attempts to explore, "une couleur alors pas localement vraie au point de vue réaliste du trompe-l'oeil, mais une couleur suggestive d'une émotion quelconque d'ardeur de tempérament", in letter 533, (8 September, 1888), written only a few days after the passage quoted above, suggests that a similar theory was at work when *The Sower*, F.422, was first painted.

Vincent's portrait of a *Bugler of the Zouave Regiment*, F.423, is first described in letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), at the same time as *The Sower*, F.422. The subject, a young Zouave with short cropped hair and trim moustache is depicted half length in a dark blue jacket decorated with gold braid, blue cumberbund, and red cap set at an angle on his head. Vincent depicts his uniformed subject against a background of a bright green door and a wall of orange bricks. In Vincent's first description of his subject, in letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), he describes the
Zouave in animal-like terms.

...c'est un garçon à petit figure, à cou de tareau, à l'œil de tigre....

(501)

This characterization is repeated in the description of the colours of the portrait,

...le buste que j'ai peint de lui était horriblement dur, en uniforme du bleu des casseroles émaillées bleues, à passementerie d'un rouge orangé fané, avec deux étoiles sur la poitrine, un bleu commun et bien dur à faire.

La tête féline très bronzée coiffée d'un bonnet garance je l'ai plaquée contre une porte peinte en vert et les briques orangées d'un mur. C'est donc une combinaison brutale des tons disparates, pas commode à mener.

L'étude que j'en ai fabriquée me paraît très dure, et pourtant je voudrais toujours travailler à des portraits vulgaires et même criards comme cela.

(501)

This description of the Zouave in terms of bull, tiger, or cat image, is also repeated in the description of this canvas to Wil in letter W5, (1 or 3 August, 1888).

Also a portrait bust of a Zouave, in a blue uniform with red and yellow trimmings, with a sky blue sash, a blood-red cap with a tassel, the face sunburned—black hair cropped short—eyes leering like a cats—orange and green—a small head on a bull's neck.

(W5)

It would appear, then, that the colour in this canvas described in letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), as "une combinaison brutale des tons disparates", and characterized further as harsh, vulgar, and loud, ("le buste...était horriblement dur...; ...je voudrais toujours travailler à des portraits vulgaires et même criards comme cela".), and as ugly in letter B8, (c. 1 July, 1888),
("C'est dur et enfin laid...".), is intended to correspond to or convey the harsh, savage, and animal-like quality that Vincent associates with the character of his subject.

In light of the above characterization, the way in which colour areas in this canvas have been juxtaposed should be noted. While Vincent does not seem to find blue/orange or yellow/violet contrasts as unpleasant, Vincent's descriptions of The Zouave, F.423, outlined above, indicate that the red/green and orange juxtaposition in this canvas is considered as harsh, vulgar, loud, and ugly. While Vincent's reactions to these colours may be entirely personal, it is worth observing that it was not uncommon to consider red/green complementary contrasts as the harshest of complementary pair juxtapositions. Rood, in his chapter on colour combinations in his Modern Chromatics, a book well known to the neoimpressionist artists in Paris, uses the term "harsh" to describe red/green-blue and purple/green complementary pairs, and observed that these contrasts were the least frequently used in art. Rood attributed this harshness to two factors. First, both these complementary pairs coincide with the demarcation line that divides the hue circle into two halves of warm and cold areas with the result that these pairs are subjected to simultaneous contrast, as complementaries, and as well a contrast effected by their extreme positions in terms of warm-cold division. Rood also observes that an emerald green or blue-green colour excites in most persons a feeling of disgust and causes a work otherwise good to appear cold and hard. Rood also states that in conjunction with other hues, emerald or blue-greens produce,"a harsh
effect, if the green is at all decided or covers much space". Rood's observations certainly coincide with Vincent's response to the portrait of The Zouave, F.423, and as well to Delacroix's use of emerald green in the canvas Christ on the Lake of Gennesaret.

That orange is juxtaposed with the red/green contrast in this canvas, also appears to affect Vincent's reaction to the portrait of the Zouave. He refers in letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), to "une combinaison brutale des tons disparates, pas commode à mener". In terms of the colour structure of the portrait of The Zouave, F.423, the area of orange brick in the composition is emphasized as much as the juxtaposition of the Zouave's red cap against the green door behind. Even without the knowledge of the careful balance of yellow and violet in The Sower, F.422, or Vincent's reference to the mental labour of balancing the six primary and secondary colours in letter 507, (c. 7 July, 1888), the juxtaposition of orange, red, and green in The Zouave, F.423, seems unbalanced. A comparison with a self portrait painted in January, 1889, the Self Portrait with a Bandaged Ear, F.529, which utilizes the same red, green, orange, and blue colour areas that appear in the portrait of the Zouave, yet within an overall structure that emphasizes balance, stability, and calm, points up the nature of the lack of colour balance in The Zouave, F.423. In the Self Portrait with a Bandaged Ear, F.529, the background of the composition is divided horizontally in half; the lower half is a flat red, and the upper half, a flat orange. Against this background Vincent has depicted himself in a green jacket and blue cap. The green jacket is thus set against the red half of the
background and the blue cap against the orange half. It appears that this careful balance was intended to effect a certain subjective response. At the time when the Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear, F.529, was painted, Vincent had just passed through the crisis with Gauguin in which he had sliced his own ear, and was recovering in the hospital at Arles. In this context the careful balance of complementary pairs, emphasized by the horizontal division of the canvas into two equal halves, seems a deliberate attempt on Vincent's part to depict himself in terms of the balance and equilibrium that he was so much seeking to regain at this time. Indeed, as if to anchor himself firmly to this colour structure that suggests equilibrium, Vincent has structured this self portrait so that the border that divides the red and orange halves of the canvas background, also provides the compositional line along which Vincent's eyes are aligned. Other non-colour features of this portrait reinforce this deliberate focus on calm and tranquility. The bandaged ear, the outward manifestation of Vincent's recent turmoil is turned toward the viewer; smoke from the pipe held in Vincent's mouth rises slowly in an undisturbed vertical line, and Vincent's eyes have a calm, even passive and sad look.

The deliberate balance of red/green and blue/orange in the Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear, F. 529, emphasizes the lack of complementary colour balance in the portrait of The Zouave, F.423. As already pointed out, Vincent describes the colour structure in this work as, "une combinaison brutale des ton disparatres". Portraits created by such colours are described as "vulgaires et..."
criards". The young Zouave, who is the subject of the portrait, is himself characterized in brutal terms. He has a bull's neck, a feline head, and the leering eyes of a tiger or cat. The "brutale" colour combination that is used to depict this sitter thus corresponds to Vincent's response to his subject. By extension, this particular colour structure seems intended to elicit a similar response from the viewer.

The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426

In letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888), Vincent describes The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426, a canvas that also points to a concern with suggestive or expressive colour. The high horizon and an elevated viewpoint in this canvas give an overview of the Rhone River, in the right half of the composition, and a concrete walkway that runs alongside the river on the left. The Trinquetaille Bridge crosses above the river and the walkway in the background. Several figures lean against or sit upon the concrete wall of the walkway and gaze into the river. On the walkway itself, one male figure strides away from the viewer and a faceless female walks toward the viewer. Figures stand on the quay beside this walkway and look into the river upon which two boats sail. The iron bridge itself, is supported on large round brick pylons and the metal superstructure, upon which pedestrians and vehicles cross the Rhone, is silhouetted against the sky.

Unlike The Sower, F.422, which is described in several of Vincent's letters, this canvas is referred to only briefly in letters 503, (c. 6 July, 1888), and 524, (14 or 15 August, 1888).
In both letters, Vincent describes the colours in this canvas.

J'ai une vue du Rhône—le pont de fer de Trinquetaille, où le ciel et le fleuve sont couleur d'absinthe, les quais d'un ton lilas, les personnages accoudés sur le parapet noirs, le pont de fer d'un bleu intense, avec dans le fond bleu une note orangé vive et une note vert véronèse intense. Encore un essai bien inachevé, mais enfin où je cherche quelque chose de plus navré, et de plus navrant par conséquent.

(503)

Il y a une vue du Rhône où le ciel et l'eau sont d'une couleur d'absinthe, avec un pont bleu et des figures de voyous noires.

(524)

The description to Theo occurs in the same letter which describes Delacroix's colour as able to speak, "un langage symbolique par la couleur même". Within this context, it seems likely that the colour combinations in The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426, are to achieve the heartbreaking quality, "quelque chose de plus navré, et de plus navrant par conséquent", that Vincent describes in letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888), as part of his subject. Because Vincent makes only two brief references to this work, it is difficult to construct a full and convincing interpretation of what role colour is intended to play in this canvas. Nevertheless, an interpretation may still be posed. Vincent describes the sky and river in The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426, as absinthe in colour, and the quays as lilac. As has been noted in the discussion of the portrait of The Zouave, F.423, this particular combination was considered by Rood, at least, to be harsh and unpleasant. A similar response to such colours on Vincent's part might possibly underly his use of absinthe and lilac in two major colour areas of
The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426, these colours then conveying the heartbroken and heartbreaking character of the subject. However, the colour structure of this composition must also be noted. Like Delacroix's Christ on the Lake of Gennesaret, which Vincent found terrible because of the vast expanse of green sea which dominated the human figures, The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F. 426, similarly emphasizes the sky and river of absinthe. Against this backdrop, the figures on the walkway and quay, described as loafers or urchins in letter 524, (14 or 15 August, 1888), appear as dark, isolated silhouettes. Similarly silhouetted against the absinthe of the sky and river, are the horse and cart, and pedestrians that cross the Rhone on the iron bridge.

Emphasis in the canvas, then, is given to the cement and iron of the waterfront. The urchins, "des figures de voyous", that lounge on the cement walk and stare into the river emphasize isolation. The anonymous silhouetted quality of their forms set against the harsh colours of the river, seem intended to underline the quality of "quelque chose de plus navré et de plus navrant par consequent",267 that Vincent sought to express.

Portrait of Patience Escalier, F. 443.

Vincent again refers to expressive colour in discussing the Portrait of Patience Escalier, F.443268 in letters B15, (c. 18 August, 1888), and 520, (11 August, 1888). The portrait is a bust of a bearded peasant in jacket, scarf, and brimmed hat. The background against which the peasant is set
is an intense blue that contrasts with both the peasant's yellow hat, its contours outlined in red to set it off from the blue background, and the yellow and orange that indicate the lines of the peasants face.

In both letter B15, (c. 18 August, 1888), and letter 520, (11 August, 1888), Vincent relates his portrait of Patience Escalier to both the peasant subject matter of the Nuenen period and to his concern with colour during the same time. To Bernard, Vincent writes,

Ah! j'ai tout de même une nouvelle figure qui est absolument une contuation de certaines études de têtes faites en Hollande. Je te les ai un jour montrées avec un tableau de ce temps-là: Les mangeurs de pommes de terre, je voudrais te la montrer. C'est toujours une étude où la couleur joue un tel rôle que le blanc et noir du dessin ne saurait le rendre.

... Car encore une fois, la couleur est suggestive de l'air embrasé de la moisson du plein midi, en plein canicule, et sans cela c'est un autre tableau.

(B15)

In describing this Portrait of Patience Escalier, F.443, to Theo, in letter 520, (11 August, 1888), Vincent again likens it to the Potato Eaters, F.82. In doing so Vincent implies that the dealer, Portier, who had criticized this canvas in 1885 because of its dark tone and the exaggerated anatomy and expressions of the figures, would similarly criticize the depiction of Patience Escalier for its concern with exaggerated effects, particularly in the realm of colour.

La couleur de ce portrait de paysan est moins noire que les mangeurs de pomme de terre de Nuenen—mais le très civilisé
Parisien Portier, probablement ainsi nommé parce qu'il fout les tableaux à la porte, s'y retrouvera le mez devant la même question. Maintenant toi depuis as changé, mais tu verras que lui m'a pas changé, et vraiment, c'est dommage qu'il n'y ait pas davantage de tableaux en sabots à Paris.

While Vincent's palette has changed radically since that period, his concern with depicting the character of the peasant's existence still continues. In letter 520, (11 August, 1888), he writes to Theo,

...nous avons lu La Terre et Germinal, et si nous peignons un paysan, nous aimerons montrer que cette lecture a un peu fini par faire corps avec nous.

This reference to Zola whose focus is the effect of environment on the individual, has already been discussed in the relation to The Sower, F.422, and serves to underline Vincent's concern with placing his subject in its proper context. In a long passage in this same letter, Vincent explains how exaggeration of colour effects are essential to expressing this vision. At the same time he re-emphasizes that such exaggeration, which is intended to be expressive, has its roots in his concern with expressive form and colour at Nuenen, when he had been first introduced to the art of Delacroix. Thus Vincent follows a description of his canvas of Patience Escalier as having, "la qualité ensoleillée et brûlée, hâlée du grand soleil et du grand air", by explaining,

Il y a seulement que je trouve que ce que j'ai appris à Paris s'en va, et que je reviens à mes idées qui m'étaient venues à la campagne, avant de connaître les impressionnistes. Et je serais peu étonné, si sous peu
les impressionistes trouveraient à redire sur ma façon de faire, qui a plutôt été fécondée par les idées de Delacroix, que par les leurs.

Car au lieu de chercher à rendre exactement ce j'ai devant les yeux, je me sers de la couleur plus arbitrairement pour m'exprimer fortement.

Enfin, laissons cela tranquille en tant que théorie, mais je vais te donner un exemple de ce que je veux dire.

Je voudrais faire le portrait d'un ami artiste, qui rêve des grands rêves, qui travaille comme le rossignol chante, parce que c'est ainsi sa nature. Cet homme sera blond. Je voudrais mettre dans le tableau mon appréciation, mon amour que j'ai pour lui.

Je le peindrai donc tel quel, aussi fidèlement que je pourrai, pour commencer. Mais le tableau n'est pas fini ainsi. Pour le finir je vais maintenant être coloriste arbitraire.

J'exagère le blond de la chevelure, j'arrive aux tons orangés, aux chromes, au citron pâle.

Derrière la tête, au lieu de peindre le mur banal du mesquin appartement, je peins l'infini, je fais un fond simple du bleu le plus riche, le plus intense, que je puisse confectionner, et par cette simple combinaison la tête blonde éclairée sur ce fond bleu riche obtient un effet mystérieuse comme l'étoile dans l'azur profond.

While Vincent does not paint this portrait of his artist friend until early September, the description of process in this passage is crucial to the evolution of Vincent's use of colour. Emphasized here is that Vincent's colour is not arbitrary, but rather, as in the case of the projected portrait of the artist friend, determined by the specifics of Vincent's vision. Thus the background against which this portrait head is to be set is described as abstracted from reality in order to emphasize Vincent's particular concept of the artist's realm or environment. As this
background is an intense blue, the features of the face are correspondingly heightened to orange, so that there may be a simultaneous contrast between the subject and environment, and the artist thus becomes "l'étoile dans l'azur profonde".

It is clear from Vincent's own discussion here, that the exaggeration of colour effects must be placed within an interpretative context constructed from the artist's own associations with the subject. At the end of the passage quoted above, Vincent relates this exaggerated and suggestive colour to the *Portrait of Patience Escalier*, F.443.

As with the theoretical portrait of Vincent's artist friend, then the head of Patience Escalier is set against an abstract background that is to be in this case, suggestive of the heat and sun of the midi countryside. Thus the intense and impastoed blue that creates the background of this canvas represents the particular character of the environment in which Patience Escalier works. As is indicated by the reference to Zola's *La Terre* and *Germinal,*
this background plays a role in formulating the character of Patience Escalier himself. 274

The Portrait of Patience Escalier, F.443, then, like The Sower, F.422, The Zouave, F.423, and The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426, reveals Vincent's concern with using exaggerated colour to suggest important aspects of his subject. In The Sower, F.422, colour is exaggerated so that two areas of yellow and violet are able to suggest by means of an understanding of the simultaneous contrast of colours, the significance of the sower's activity in the contest of the cycle of the seasons. In The Zouave, F.423, a balance of complementary colours is deliberately avoided and a savage and harsh effect appears intended to convey the animal-like quality of the young soldier. The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F.426, makes use of a similarly jarring complementary pair, lilac and green, to express what Vincent sees as a heartbreaking quality in the scene. In the Portrait of Patience Escalier, F.443, colour, in this case the blue impastoed background, is used to convey the character of the Provencal climate and to suggest the heat and sun under which the peasant works. As in the canvases discussed above, colour relationships are more important to Vincent's idea of expressive colour than single colour areas. The yellow hat and the orange and yellow of the peasants face give the complementary to the blue of the background. This recalls Vincent's comment that the south calls these two colours forth repeatedly. 276 At the same time, as in The Sower, F.422, the simultaneous contrast that in theory occurs between the two colour areas, seems intended to suggest the interaction between the peasant and his environment. 277a
PART TWO

THE DECORATION CANVASES FOR THE YELLOW HOUSE
CHAPTER V

THE CONCEPT OF THE YELLOW HOUSE

Before examining the relationship between colour, and the canvases for the decoration of the Yellow House, it is useful here to outline the significance Vincent gave to his residence in Arles. When the Yellow House was first rented, Vincent expressed in letter 480, (1 May, 1888), his hope that he would now have a stable and fixed working environment which would benefit his painting. Vincent also expressed, shortly after the house was rented that he hoped that a group of painters might live together in his rented accommodation. Thus, in letter 493 (c.5 June, 1888), Vincent notes that Bernard as well as Gauguin was thinking of coming to the south of France. Vincent adds that such a situation would bring about his vision of an association of impressionist painters with Theo at its head in his capacity as a dealer. To effect the success of this association, Vincent explains that he would be willing to look on the other artists of the group as greater than himself in order to make the good of the association the greatest priority.

C'est d'ailleurs ma spéculation de me combiner avec d'autres.
Voici ce serait un commencement d'association. Bernard qui va aussi dans le midi nous joindra, et sache le bien, je te vois toujours en France à la tête d'une association d'impressionistes. Et si moi je pourrais
That two or three artists could live together in the Yellow House and share expenses is discussed again in letter 500, (23 June, 1888). The idea of artists working together and sharing expenses was an important one to Vincent. While he sees artists working together as able to benefit from the dynamics of the interchange of ideas, he also is concerned with the financial side of such an association. In letter 468, (10 March, 1888) he discusses the benefits of forming an association of impressionist artists, in which proceeds from the sales of paintings would be shared. All artists would contribute paintings to a value of 10,000 francs, but those contributed by well known artists such as Monet, Sisley Renoir, Degas, and Camille Pissarro, would guarantee an income to lesser known artists such as Seurat, Guillaumin, and Gauguin.

As has been pointed out in the Introduction Vincent begins to paint a decoration for the Yellow House at the same time that he is given reason to believe that Gauguin is willing to come to Arles. Much of his enthusiasm for this decoration project may be linked to his belief that the Yellow House will now become the base for the association of painters which had been so frequently discussed in the preceding months. Indeed in the letters of September and October of 1888, Vincent repeatedly stresses that not only will his size 30 canvases for the decoration be a group that he would be interested in exhibiting in 1889, but also, that these canvases have a monetary value which Vincent sets at 10,000 francs. There are
two reasons that cause Vincent to emphasize the monetary worth of these paintings. First, as he explains to Theo in letter 538, (18 September, 1888), Vincent hopes by means of his paintings, to pay Theo back both for the money that is sent to Vincent every month, and for the money Theo sent Vincent to pay for the repainting of the Yellow House. It is explained that the canvases painted for the decoration of the Yellow House are specifically intended to pay Theo back for these expenditures.

It is repeated in letters 540, (c. 22 September, 1888), 548, (9 October, 1888), and 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888) that the decorations must be worth 10,000 francs in order to regain the money that has been spent on Vincent's art over the years.

The second reason that leads Vincent to insist upon the 10,000 franc value of the decoration canvases is bound up with his vision of an association where artists would contribute works to a given value. As Gauguin's impending arrival marks the beginning of this association, Vincent is eager to provide capital to support their studio and so contribute financially to the association. He thus writes in letter 538, (18 September, 1888),

Si nous fondons ici un atelier asile pour l'un ou l'autre copain dans la déche, jamais personne ne pourra nous reprocher ni à toi ni à moi de vivre et de depenser pour nous seuls. Or pour fonder un tel atelier, il faut un fonds
The decoration canvases, then, with their value set at 10,000 francs must be understood as Vincents' contribution to his vision of an association of artists who would guarantee each others support, thereby assuring a productive working environment. Such an association would also give refuge to artists in need.

It is also important that Vincents' determination to found a studio in the south was intended to provide for artists of the future as well as of the present. Vincent refers to this vision in letter 538, (18 September, 1888). The passage quoted immediately above in which Vincent stresses that the foundation of a studio and refuge in the south will prove that he and Theo are not providing only for their own livelihood, is followed with the explanation,

Mais mon idée serait qu'au bout du compte on eusses fondé et laisserait à la postérité un atelier où pourrait vivre un successeur. Je ne sais pas si je m'exprime assez clairement, mais en d'autres termes nous travaillons à un art, à des affaires qui resteront non seulement de notre temps, mais qui pourront encore après nous, être continuées par les autres.

Again in letter 540, (c. 22 September, 1888) Vincent refers to the future of the studio he hopes to found in the south, indicating that it is to this end that he hopes to paint a decoration that will be of some monetary value.
La grand tranquillité que me procure la maison est surtout ceci que, dès maintenant je me sens travailler en prenant des précautions d'avenir, après moi un autre peintre trouvera une affaire en train. Il me faudra du temps, mais j'ai l'idée fixe de faire pour la maison une décoration, qui vaudra l'argent que j'ai dépensé dans les années dans lesquelles je n'ai pas produit.

Vincent's feeling that he is preparing the way for some future artist had been alluded to earlier in 1888. In letter 489, (c. 19 May, 1888), he describes himself as a link in a chain of artists preparing for the art of the future.

...nous sentons la réalité de ce que nous sommes peu de chasse, et que pour être un anneau dans la chaîne des artistes, nous payons la prix raide de santé, de jeunesse de liberté....
...Cette Esperance de Puvis-de Chavannes est une telle réalité. Il y a dans l'avenir un art, et il doit être si beau, et si jeune, que vrai si actuellement nous y laissons notre jeunesse à nous, nous ne pouvons qu'y gagner en serénité.

Vincent considers the art of the future as based on colour. In letter 482, (3 or 4 May, 1888), Vincent observes there does not yet exist a figure painter who works in colour alone, so parallel Monet's achievement in landscape. He adds and underlines, "Mais le peintre de l'avenir c'est un coloriste comme il n'y en a pas encore eu". In letter 525, (15 August, 1888) Vincent again calls for an achievement in portraiture to equal Monet's rich and colourful landscapes, and again indicate that it not he, but some artist of the future generation who will accomplish this task.
J'aime mieux attendre la génération à venir, qui fera en portrait ce que Claude Monet fait en paysage, le paysage riche et crâne à la Guy de Maupassant.

Alors je sais que moi je ne suis pas de ces gens-là, mais le Flaubert et les Balzac n'ont-ils pas fait les Zola et les Maupassant? Vive donc non pas nous, mais la génération à venir.

(525)

Vincent firmly believed that this new art of colour was to be centered in the south. To Theo in letter 555, (17 October, 1888), he writes,

Qu'une nouvelle école coloriste prendra racine dans le midi j'y crois, voyant de plus en plus que ceux du Nord se fondent plutôt sur l'habileté de la brosse, et l'effet dit pittoresque, que sur le désir d'exprimer quelque chose par la couleur même.

(555)

Vincent has a strong sense of his role as a link in this chain of artists working with colour.292 This concept is part of Vincent's firm belief that he is carrying on the work of two artists whom he associates with the south, Eugène Delacroix and Adolphe Monticelli. Through the spring and summer of 1888, Vincent pointed to these two artists as precursors in the realm of exaggerated colour,293 and even suggestive colour.294 Vincent was especially attracted to Monticelli, and in his letters to Theo refers several times to the stories that described Monticelli in his last years in Marseille as lonely and drunk.295 In several letters of the fall of 1888, Vincent explains that he feels he is carrying on Monticelli's work. In W 8, (c. 26 August 1888), to Wil, Vincent describes how he will dress up like Monticelli and wander through Marseilles to emphasize this link.
Je pense moi ici enormément à Monticelli. C'était un homme fort - un peu toqué et même beaucoup - rêvant soleil et amour et gaité mais toujours embêté par la pouvreté - un gout extrêmement raffine de coloriste, un homme de race rare continuant les meilleurs traditions anciennes Il meurt à Marseille assez tristement et probablement en passant par véritable Gethsemane. Eh bien, moi je suis sur que je le continue ici comme si j'étais son fils ou son frère.

Nous parlions tout à l'heure de fatalité qui nous paraît triste. Mais n'en existe-il pas une autre fatalite charmante. Et qu'est ce que cela nous fait qu'il y ait ou non une résurrection lorsque nous voyons immédiatement surgir un homme vivant à la place d'un homme mort. Reprenant la même cause, continuant le même travail, vivant de la même vie, mourant de la même mort.

L'orsque l'ami Gauguin sera ici et que nous irons à Marseille je me suis bien proposé de me promener là sur la Cannebière absolument vêtue comme lui, comme j'ai vu son portrait avec un immense chapeau jaune, un veston de velours noir, un pantalon blanc, de gants jaunes et une canne de roseau, et avec un grand air méridional.

(W8)

To Theo in letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888),

Vincent also indicates that he is continuing Monticelli's work. In describing his own recent paintings he writes,

Les études actuelles sont réellement d'une seule coulée de pâte. La touche n'est pas divisée beaucoup et les tons sont souvent rompus, et enfin involontairement je suis obligé d'y empâter à la Monticelli. Parfois je crois réellement continuer cet homme - là....

(541)

In a postscript to letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888),

Vincent explains that this insistence that he is carrying on Monticelli's work is tied to his vision of founding a studio in the south with Gauguin.
Un jour Mme de Lareby Larouquette me dit: 'Mais Monticelli, Monticelli, mais c'était un homme qui aurait du être à la tête d'un grand atelier dans le midi.'
Moi j'ai écrit à notre soeur et à toi, tu te rappelles, l'autre jour, que parfois je croyais sentir qui je continuais Monticelli ici. Bon, mais tu vois actuellement, cet atelier en question nous le fondons.
Ce que fera Gauguin, ce que moi aussi je ferai, cela se tiendra avec cette belle ouevre de Monticelli et nous chercherons à prouver aux bonnes personnes que Monticelli n'est pas mort avachi sur les tables des cafés de la Cannebière tout à fait, mais que le petit bonhomme vit encore. Et avec nous mêmes la chose me finira même pas, nous la mettons en train sur base assez solide.

(542)
The studio of the south, while providing a base for an association of painters of present and future generations also assumes a more symbolic role. Vincent firmly believes in a new art of colour, and thus, is able to see his own concern with colour as a continuation of the concerns of artists such as Delacroix and Monticelli. That, Monticelli actually worked in the south of France, and that he died in poverty seems to reinforce Vincent's vision of a studio in the south that would provide a refuge not only for artists of the present, but for those of the future who will hopefully carry on Vincent's work as he has carried on Monticellis'.

As will be shown in the following descussion of the canvases for the decoration Vincent's vision of the birth of a new art centered in the south, and his strong sense of artistic legacy, merge with a very personal need to formulate a meaningful and hence consoling vision of human existence. A focus on autumnal subject matter and a concern with the suggestive
properties of colour in the decoration canvases, allow these larger themes to be expressed.
CHAPTER VI

THE DECORATION CANVASES

The seventeen size 30 canvases that Vincent had painted for the decoration of his Yellow House by the time of Gauguin's arrival in Arles on October 23 or 24, 1888, have been identified in Introduction. As well, Vincent's references to a concern with suggestive colour, and his announcement of a new technique that deliberately avoids the detailed brushwork of impressionism, and neoimpressionism, have been pointed out. The discussion of the decoration canvases in the sections of this chapter will follow as closely as possible the order in which each was painted. Each section will comprise a description of the canvas, or canvases concerned, followed by a survey and analysis of Vincent's remarks concerning each canvas, in order to determine the significance of colour, colour relationships and technique to the intended meaning of each work.

The Sunflowers, F.454, and F.456.

The two size 30 canvases of sunflowers that are part of the decoration of canvases for the Yellow House are Vase with Twelve Sunflowers, F.456, (Plate 1), first described in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), and Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers, F.454, (Plate 2), described in both letters 527, (c. 22 August, 1888), and 528, (c. 26 August, 1888). The focus in both canvases is a
stoneware vase filled with sunflowers. The vase is placed upon a plain flat table surface, represented as a horizontal band that extends across the lower quarter of the canvas. A plain solid colour area provides the background to this subject. In *Vase with Twelve Sunflowers*, F.456, this background is a pale blue-green, and broad interwoven, horizontal and vertical brushstrokes texture the thick impasto of this colour area. The table surface is rendered in a thick yellow-gold pigment textured with predominantly horizontal brushstrokes. The lower half of the stoneware vase is a neutral beige, with touches of pale orange and yellow evident in the impasto; the upper half of this vase is pale yellow, the pigment applied in short horizontal brushstrokes. In contrast, the bunch of flower heads are rendered by means of a closely textured impastoed surface that suggests, either the minute detail of a multitude of petals, or, in fully opened flowers, the striations and folds of each single petal. In *Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers*, F.454, the composition varies as the flower heads are not so closely massed together and instead stand or droop upon their long stalks. In this canvas, both the horizontal gold band of the table top and the stoneware vase—the upper half gold and the lower half a cream or neutral colour—are rendered in a flat impasto that does not reveal the brushwork pattern. The flowers in this composition, various yellows and golds, are rendered by means of the same densely textured impasto as *Vase with Twelve Sunflowers*, F.456. The background against which they are set however, is a pale yellow with small touches of green evident in the impastoed surface.302
The colours used in each of these canvases initially appear to answer to Vincent's promise in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), that the decoration of sunflowers will be, "une symphonie en bleu et jaune...". However, a new technique for rendering colour that Vincent announces in his first discussions of these canvases is also important to the sunflowers.

In letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), following a description of his first three sunflower canvases which includes Vase with Twelve Sunflowers, F.456, Vincent explains,

...je commence de plus en plus à chercher une technique simple, qui peut-être n'est pas impressioniste. Je voudrais peindre de façon, qu'à la rigueur tout le monde qui a des yeux, puisse y voir clair.

(526)

Vincent defines what he means by, "une technique simple", in his following letter 527, (c. 22 August, 1888), in which he also describes his fourth sunflower canvas, Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers, F.454, as painted "avec plus de simplicité...".

Est-ce que tu rapelles que nous avons un jour vu à l'hôtel Drouot un Manet bien extraordinaire, quelques grosses pivoines roses et leurs feuilles vertes sur un fond clair? Aussi dans l'air, et aussi fleur que n'importe quoi, et pourtant peint en pleine pâte solide...

Voilà ce que j'appellerais simplicité de technique. Et je dois te dire que de ces jours-ci je m'efforce à trouver un travail de la brosse sans pointillé ou autre chose, rien que la touche variée. Mais un jour tu verras.

(527)

In letter 528, (c. 26 August, 1888), Vincent again notes that in the canvas of fourteen sunflowers the painting is,"bien plus simple", and again cites Manet's peonies painted, "en pleine pâte", to explain his use of the term. That the use of a simple
and thick impasto is an alternative to pointilist technique is also reasserted.

Pour le pointillé pour auréoler ou autre choses je trouve cela un véritable découverte; mais c'est déjà à prévoir que cette technique, pas plus qu'une autre, de veindra un dogma universel. Raison de plus pourquoi "La Grande Jatte" de Seurat, les paysages à gros pointilles de Signac, le bateau d'Anquetin, par le temps deveindront encore personnelles...."

Vincent's rejection of pointilism and stippling outlined in these two letters had been hinted at a few weeks earlier in letter 520, (11 August, 1888), when Vincent had described his first portrait of the peasant, Patience Escalier, and emphasized that his aim was to exaggerate colour in order to express himself forcefully. He concluded this explanation by adding that he would not be surprised,"si peu les impressionistes à redire sur ma façon de faire..."

In both Vase with Twelve Sunflowers, F.456, and Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers, F.454, Vincent's exploration of his new and simple technique may be seen. In both canvases, a new brushwork works a thick impasto into a pattern of ridges and peaks that are broad and varied in the background, and small and detailed in areas such as the flower centres. In this way a solid or uniform colour area is given a lustrous or vibrant effect by means of the contrast between the highlights and shadows created by the textured surface. The technique is "simple" as individual brushstrokes are replaced by this more fluid manner of applying pigment to the canvas. Within a single colour area, the manipulation of a thick and textured impasto may effect a detailed or plain colour surface. While the need for the careful application of hues and hue varia-
tions is removed, the tendency in impastoed painting for a single
brushstroke to carry and mix two or three pigment colours may be
used to achieve subtle colour nuances.

In letter W 8, (c. 26 August, 1888), written just after the
completion of the Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers, F. 454, Vincent
describes one of his sunflower canvases in a way that gives a wider
significance to this subject matter, colour, and technique. In
this letter as has been pointed out in the preceeding chapter
Vincent describes at length his admiration for the painter
Monticelli, whom he describes as, "un homme fort...révant soleil
et amour et gaité". Vincent explains that he feels he is
carrying on Monticelli's work in the south as if he was Monticelli's
son or his brother, and to emphasize this point describes how
once Gauguin arrives in Arles, he intends to dress up like
Monticelli and walk through Marseilles, which Vincent anticipates
will cause great excitement among Monticelli's acquaintances
and friends. Vincent then describes his Vase with Fourteen
Sunflowers, F. 454, in relation to Monticelli.

Monticelli est un peintre qui a fait le Midi
en plein jaune, en plein orange, en plein
soufre....Aussi moi j'ai déjà prét exprès un
tableau en plein jaune de tournesols (14 fleurs
dans un vase jaune et sur un fond jaune, c'en
est encore un autre que le precedent avec
12 fleurs sur fond bleu-vert). Et je compte
un jour exposer celui-là à Marseille. Et tu
verras qu'il y aura un Marseillais ou un autre
qui se souviendra de ce que Monticelli a dit et
fait dans le temps.

(W 8)

The use of yellows, oranges, and ochres in Vase with Fourteen
Sunflowers, F. 454, -colours that Monticelli is describes as having
used to render the south-poses the sunflowers as a hommage to
Monticelli and to the south. However, Vincent associates not only the colours that appear in his sunflower canvases, particularly *Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers*, F. 454, with Monticelli, but also his use of a thick inpasto. In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), Vincent likens his use of pigment to Monticelli's, using this similarity as an example of how he feels his is carrying on the dead painters work.

In a postscript to letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888), Vincent explains that this feeling that he is carrying on Monticelli's work is bound up with his vision of the studio of the south, as he argues that by painting the landscape and people of the south in colour, both Gauguin and he will prove that Monticelli did not waste his life, as the description of his death, "avachi sur les tables des cafés de la Cannebière", implies. Given this association, Vincent's use of a thick impasto in a canvas for the decoration of the Yellow House seems particularly fitting as this technique overtly points to Vincent's own continuation of a predecessor's work. *The Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers*, F. 454, then, may be seen, in terms of colour and possibly technique, as a reference to Monticelli, a reference that implies Vincent's determination to effect a studio where a new art of colour will flourish both in the present and in the future.
It is possible to see the arrangement of sunflowers in both size 30 canvases as supporting this concept of artistic legacy. In both *Vase with Twelve Sunflowers*, F.456, and *Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers*, F.454, the sunflowers are shown in stages ranging from full bloom through to a bare flower head that has almost totally gone to seed. There is a cyclical emphasis implied in this image as the fading of the flower to produce seeds promises the generation of new growth. As such, the composition of the sunflowers may be seen as an allusion to Vincent's concept of the continuation of an artist through the work of another. Indeed, in letter W8, (c. 26 August, 1888), to Wil, Vincent had used the term "résurrection" to describe the significance of a living artist, such as himself, springing up in the same place as a dead artist, such as Monticelli.

Il (Monticelli) meurt à Marseille assez tristement... Eh bien, moi je suis sur que je le continue ici comme si j'étais son fils ou son frère.
Nous parlions tout à l'heure de fatalité qui nous paraît triste. Mais n'en existe-il pas une autre fatalité charmante. Et qu'est-ce que cela nous fait qu'il y ait ou non une résurrection lorsque nous voyons immédiatement surgir un homme vivant à la place d'un homme mort.

(W8)

That Vincent intended to convey this sense of artistic continuation by his focus on sunflowers in various stages of their cycle is further supported by his use of a flower image in a similar way some months earlier. In the spring of 1888, upon hearing of the death of the artist, Anton Mauve, Vincent's response in letter 472, (30 or 31 March, 1888), was to quote a verse that
affirms the survival of the dead through the work of the living.

Ne crois pas que les morts soient morts,
Tant qu'il y aura des vivants, Les morts vivront, les morts vivront.

(472)

In this same letter Vincent explained that he had dedicated a recent canvas of a young peach tree in bloom to the memory of Mauve because, "il me semblait qu'il fallait en memoire de Mauve quelque chose et de tendre et de très gai". The choice of this blossoming fruit tree seems designed to imply ongoing life, and promise of future fruitfulness through the work of others, that is Vincent's response to Mauve's death.

The above interpretation of the significance of the sunflower blooms that range from heads in flower to those gone to seed is dependant on Vincent's special concept of artistic continuation outlined previously, and not on the traditional iconography associated with sunflowers. That this interpretation is possibly valid here, however, is suggested, as it will be shown in the following discussions of the remaining size canvases of the decoration that several emphasize a similar theme, and the rebirth imagery implicit in autumnal subject matter is integrated with Vincent's vision of artistic continuation culminating in a renaissance effecting a future art of colour.

The Night Café, F.463.

In letter 533, (8 September, 1888), Vincent describes to Theo his canvas of The Night Café, F.463, (Plate 3). The subject of this composition is a garishly coloured cafe interior lit by
three gas lights. The view is toward the bar at the far end of the café, and a lighted room glimpsed behind a curtained doorway in the wall behind. Tables and chairs line three walls of the café and a large billiard table occupies the centre of the room. The café is sparsely populated. Two figures sprawl or sleep over a table on the right wall, a man and woman converse at a table against the rear wall, and a single man hunches over a table at the far end of the left wall. The proprietor of the café stands in the centre of the room and stares out at the viewer.

Vincent explains in letter 533, (8 September, 1888), that he painted this canvas by staying up for three consecutive nights and that the subject was undertaken as he was about to move into the Yellow House, and wished to avenge himself for paying so much room and board to his former landlord, the hotel and café proprietor. Initially, Vincent seems to have hoped to have made up his lost money by selling this canvas of the night café; with the canvas completed, however, Vincent abandons this plan, as the picture, he feels, is ugly.

Maintenant pour ce qui est de rattraper l'argent payé au logeur par ma peinture, je n'insiste pas, car le tableau est un des plus laids que j'ai faits. Il est équivalent, quoique different, aux Mangeurs de pommes de terre.

(533)

This statement condemns neither The Night Café, F.463, nor the Nuenen canvas of 1885, The Potato Eaters, F.82. Rather it raises again a point that Vincent himself made in the summer of 1888 when he had indicated in letter 520, (11 August, 1888), that
his exploration of a suggestive colour was in many ways dependant upon concerns at work in 1885, "à la campagne, avant de connaître les impressionistes".\(^{314}\) Vincent's continuing concern with suggestive colour had been reaffirmed in letter 531, (3 September, 1888), when Vincent wrote of his study of colour,

\[
\begin{align*}
J'\text{ai toujours l'espoir de trouver quelque chose là-dedans.} \\
\text{Exprimer l'amour de deux amoureux par un mariage de deux complémentaires, leur mélange et leurs oppositions, les vibrations mystérieux des tons rapprochés. Exprimer la pensée d'un front par le rayonnement d'un ton clair sur un fond sombre.} \\
\text{Exprimer l'espérance par quelqu'étoile.} \\
\text{L'ardeur d'un être par un rayonnement de soleil couchant. Ce n'est certes pas là du trompe-l'œil réaliste, mais n'est-ce pas une chose réellement existante?}
\end{align*}
\]

(531)

In *The Night Café*, F.463, Vincent uses both exaggerated and suggestive colour, as he explains to Theo in letter 533, (8 September, 1888),\(^{315}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
J'\text{ai cherché à exprimer avec le rouge et les verts les terribles passions humaines.} \\
\text{La salle est rouge jaune sourd, un billard vert au milieu, 4 lampes jaune citron à rayonnement orange et vert. C'est partout un combat et une antithèse des verts et des rouges les plus différents, dans les personnages de voyous dormeurs petits, dans la salle vide et triste, du violet et du bleu. Le rouge sang et le vert jaune du billard exemple contrastent avec le petit vert tendre Louis XV du comptoir, où il y a un bouquet rose.} \\
\text{Les vêtements blancs du patron, veillant dans un coin dans cette fournaise deviennent jaune citron, vert pale et lumineux...} \\
\text{Le "Café de nuit" continue le "Semeur", ainsi que la tête du vieux paysan et du poète....} \\
\text{C'est un couleur alors pas localement vraie au point de vue réaliste du trompe-l'œil, mais une couleur suggestive d'une émotion quelconque d'ardeur de tempérament.}
\end{align*}
\]

(533)
Vincent's emphasis of harsh, clashing and contrasting colours is to suggest his own response to the all night café. In letter 534, (9 September, 1888), Vincent indicates more clearly his personal vision of the café.

Dans mon tableau de café de nuit, j'ai cherché à exprimer que le café est un endroit où l'on peut se ruiner, deviner fou, commettre des crimes. Enfin j'ai cherché par des contrastes de rose tendre et de rouge sang et lie de vin, de doux vert Louis XV et Veronèse, contrastant avec les verts jaunes, et les verts bleus durs, tout cela dans une atmosphère de fournaise infernale, de soufre pâle, exprimer comme la puissance des ténèbres d'un assommoir.

(534)

In this statement Vincent makes it clear that the impact of this canvas, the portrayal of an environment that is artificial, disquieting and upsetting, is to be conveyed primarily by colour relationships. The attention given to the balance of complementary pairs in Vincent's work of 1888, has been discussed already in this thesis. The notable exception to this careful balance of complementary pairs, The Zouave, F.423, was described by Vincent as vulgar, harsh and ugly. In The Night Café, F.463, a similar and deliberate avoidance of colour balance is manipulated to produce the glaring and disturbing café interior. A brilliant yellow-green in this composition defines the ceiling of the café; the upper wall is a band of flat bright red, and the floor and lower walls are a brilliant yellow. The lower half of this composition, then, is dominated by red and yellow and the brightness of the floor, instead of ceiling, imparts a disturbing quality of hard and artificial light. The transforming power of this yellow
light is easily seen: the front of the bar and the top of the billiard table become a glaring green-yellow, the jackets of the seated figures become a washed out blue, and the suit of the proprietor—presumably a white or neutral colour under daylight—assumes the unnatural green and yellow tint that dominates the room. No play of shadows around the room softens or alleviates the harsh glare of this interior light; the large shadow cast by the billiard table in the room's centre serves primarily to add to the incongruity of the scene. The total effect of Vincent's colour manipulation then, is glaring, hard, and offensive, and suggests a ruthless interior in which "les rôdeurs du nuit", can find no rest.

The emphasis in The Night Café, F.463, on the disturbing and unnatural environment that is the only haven for the unwanted citizens of the night has a particular relevance for Vincent in these weeks prior to Gauguin's arrival in Arles. Vincent had first indicated that he intended to paint the interior of this café by gaslight, in letter 518, (6 August, 1888). In describing the outcasts who take refuge in such night cafés, Vincent indicates his own feelings of isolation and homelessness, and makes a direct association between his own life, and the lives of the night prowlers and outcasts, who are homeless and distant from family.

Je vais aujourd'hui probablement commencer l'intérieur du café ou je loge, le soir au gaz.

C'est ce qu'on appelle ici un 'café de nuit' (ils sont assez frequents ici) qui restent ouverts toute la nuit. Les 'rôdeurs de nuit' peuvent y trouver un asile donc, lorsqu'ils
n'ont pas de quoi se payer un logement ou qu'ils sont trop souûls pour y admis.
Toutes les choses, famille, patrie sont peut-être plus charmantes dans l'imagination de tels que nous, qui nous passons passable-ment bien de patrie ainsi que de famille.... Il me semble toujours être un voyageur, qui va quelque part et à une destination.

(518)

In letter 521, (12 August, 1888), Vincent characterizes both himself and Gauguin as living in cafés and hotels as madmen or criminals, "des fous ou malfaiteurs". This image corresponds to Vincent's description of the night café in letter 534, (9 September, 1888), as a place where one can go mad and commit a crime, "l'on peut se ruiner, deviner fou, commettre des crimes". In letter 521, (12 August, 1888), Vincent further poses joining with Gauguin and living in the Yellow House as an alternative to living in such cafés.

...il (Gauguin) n'y perdra rien....Si nous vivons chez nous à l'atelier au lieu de vivre lui et moi dans les cafés.... Vivant seul de part et d'autre ou vit comme des fous ou malfaiteurs en apparence au moins, et en réalité un peu également.

(521)

The serene aspects of a permanent home are frequently emphasized by Vincent. In letter 532, (4 September, 1888), written just prior to the announcement of The Night Café, F.463, Vincent discusses with Theo the necessity of having a home in which they may settle down and rest, while they are still relatively young; such a home, he argues, would prevent being brutalized nervous wrecks at some point in the future.
Que je voudrais m'établir de façon à avoir chez-moi!

... Mais s'il faut faire fortune avant—on sera complètement névrosé au moment d'entrer dans ce repos, et cela est pire que l'état actuel où nous pouvons encore supporter tous les bruits. Mais soyons sages pour savoir que nous abrutissons tout de même.

(532)

This vision of the quiet restfullness of a fixed home is then compared to, "en logeant chez le logeur qui même en payant ne procure pas un logement où l'on est chez soi". In this letter Vincent also explains that a permanent home provides, "tranquillité", and in letter 540, (c. 22 September, 1888), he explains that the Yellow House has given him "la grande tranquilité", because it allows him to work to establish a studio that will continue into the future. In letter 534, (9 September, 1888), in which the night café is described as a place where,"l'on peut se ruiner, deviner fou, commettre des crimes", the beds chosen for the Yellow House are described as giving, "un aspect de solidité, de durée, de calme", suggesting that Vincent intended the furniture of the house to reinforce the quiet restfullness that the Yellow House is to provide. The Night Café, F.463, then, with its harsh, unbalanced and unrestful colour juxtapositions depicts not only a place where one can ruin oneself, go mad and commit a crime, "l'on peut se ruiner, deviner fou, commettre des crimes", but more specifically, the environment in which artists like Vincent and Gauguin have been forced to live like madmen and criminals, "des fous sur malfaiteurs". That Monticelli, whose work in the south Vincent feels he is continuing, is described by Vincent in letter 542, (25 or 26 September,
1888), as having died, "avachis sur les tables des cafés de la Cannebière", reinforces the image of the night café as the destructive environment in which artists are forced to live. As The Night Café, F.463, is painted only a few days prior to Vincent's move into the Yellow House, it seems likely that this canvas summarizes the homelessness and lack of peace and tranquility that the Yellow House as a studio in the south and refuge for artists is designed to alleviate.

The Poet's Garden, F.468, and F.1465

In letter 537, (16 or 17 September, 1888), Vincent describes a size 30 canvas that he has painted in the preceding week,

...un coin de jardin avec un arbre pleurer, de l'herbe, des buissons taillés en boule de cèdre, un buisson de laurier-rose. ...il y a sur le tout un ciel citronné, et ensuite les couleurs ont des richesses et des intensités d'automne. Ensuite, c'est bien davantage en pleine pâte, simple et grasse.

(537)

This description corresponds to the canvas of a park garden, F.468, (Plate 4). The subject of this canvas is a triangular area of grass that opens out toward the viewer and which is rimmed in the background of the composition with coniferous and deciduous shrubs and trees of various shapes and sizes. In the left middle ground, set in front of this mass of growth, is a single round clipped cedar shrub. A weeping willow tree, similarly set in front of the trees behind, stands in the right middle ground. The placement of these trees effectively leads the eye into the centre of the composition and defines a walkable space behind and around these solitary trees. The colours in this composition are based on
yellow and green. The sky is predominantly citron yellow varying from an intense bright yellow over the tree tops to a greener yellow at the top of the canvas. A pattern of horizontal brushstrokes works the very thick impasto of this colour area. The large area of green lawn below is defined by vertical brushstrokes in an equally thick impasto. This colour area is more varied -- brown and orange vertical strokes in the foreground imply the shade of some tree outside the composition, and in the middle ground yellow vertical strokes are worked in with the bright green. Over the entire lawn area small touches of thick pigment in yellow, lilac, and green, imply the growth of flowers, or possibly the effect of sunlight. The trees and shrubs are rendered by small directionalized brushstrokes, again in a very thick impasto. Green, brown and black describe the conifers, and golds, greens, and oranges are used for the deciduous shrubs and trees. The flowering oleander stands out amidst these colours because of bright green foliage and thickly impastoed pink and white flowers. Both the cedar shrub and weeping willow tree are rendered in green and highlighted with brown, orange, and black.

In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), Vincent describes a canvas that he indicates is to be a pendant to the first park garden, F. 468. 322

A partir de 7 heures du matin, j'étais assis devant...un buisson de cèdre ou de cyprès en boule, plante dans l'herbe....D'ailleurs ci-inclus un croquis de ma toile, toujours un 30 carré.

Le buisson est vert, un peu bronzé et varié. L'Herbe est est très, très, verte, du Veronèse citronné, le ciel est très très bleu. La rangée de buissons dans le fond sont tous de lauriers-roses, fous furieux, les
sacrées plantes fleurissent d'une façon que certes elles pourraient attraper une ataxie locomotrice. Elles sont chargées de fleurs fraîches et puis de tas de fleurs fanées, leur verdure également se renouvelle par de vigoureux jets nouveaux inépuisables en apparence.

Un funèbre cyprès tout noir se dresse là-dessus et quelques figurines colorées se baladent sur un sentier rose.

Cela fait pendant à une autre toile de 30 due même endroit, seulement d'un tout autre point de vue, où tout le jardin est coloré de verts très différents sous un ciel jaune citron pâle.

(541)

While this painted study has either been lost or destroyed, a sketch in letter 533B, (4 October, 1888), to Eugène Boch, that accompanies a brief description of this subject, gives some indication of the composition of this canvas,

Un boisson de cyprès ou de cèdre en boule, d'un vert bouteille. Dans le gazon vert citronné. Derrière une rangée de lauriers roses et 2 figurines. Un ciel bleu de cobalt cru. Vous voyez que c'est encore bien plus simple qu'auparavant.

(553b)

The sketch included in the letter to Boch corresponds to the drawing F.1465, (Plate 5), which is probably the enclosed drawing referred to in letter 541, (C. 23 or 24 September, 1888).

The view in this park garden (based on the drawing, F.1465), is focused on the same round clipped shrub found in F.468. In this composition however, the round shrub occupies the left foreground of the park grass. Flowering oleanders stand in a row behind this shrub and a pathway that runs diagonally from right to centre across the composition is bordered by another longer row of flowering trees. Two female figures with parasols walk along this path.
The closely woven horizontal pattern of pen strokes used to denote the sky in the drawing, F.1465, was probably intended to suggest the thick impasto used to render the "ciel bleu de cobalt cru" in the size 30 canvas of this subject, as Vincent's continued use of a thick pigment is remarked upon in the two letters that describe this composition. In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), Vincent describes his use of a thick impasto in the canvas represented by F.1465, and relates this work to its pendant, F.468.

Ce tableau-ci encore fort empâté comme son pendant à ciel jaune.

(541)

Later in this same letter he adds,

Les études actuelles sont réellement d'une seule coulée de pâte. La touche n'est pas divisée beaucoup et les tons sont souvent rompus, et enfin involontairement je suis obligé d'y empâter à la Monticelli.

(541)

To Boch, in letter 553b, (4 October, 1888), Vincent also emphasizes his use of a thick impasto in the canvas represented by F.1465.

Le jardin aux laurier-roses et au buisson en boule, est empâté comme de la barbotine.

(553b)

The detail of dashes and dots applied to the lawn around the cypress shrub in the drawing F.1465, further suggests that in the painted canvas there was an effect similar to that in the garden, F.468, where an impastoed and solid hued sky is worked in broad horizontal brushstrokes and contrasts with the grassy area below that is defined by a thick impasto worked with vertical strokes over which is applied small touches of thick pigment in-
dictating details of grass and flowers. That Vincent considered these two canvases as pendants must have depended upon this similar rendering of compositional areas by means of a thick impasto, as much as by the similarity of subject matter. Both serve to emphasize what must have been an almost opposite use of colour in the two canvases. In F.468, an intense citron yellow sky is paired with a green lawn. In Vincent's description of the colours in the pendant, represented by F.1465, a cobalt blue sky is juxtaposed with a citron yellow lawn.

These two pendant canvases had a special meaning for Vincent. In two letters, Vincent explains that this corner of the park evokes for him an image of Renaissance poets and artists. In letter 539, (18 September, 1888), Vincent writes.

> J'ai lu il y a quelque temps un article sur le Dante, Petrarque, Boccace, Giotto, Botticelli, mon dieu comme cela m'a fait de l'impression en lisant les lettres de ces gens-là. Or Pétrarque était ici tout près à Avignon, et je vois les mêmes cyprès et lauriers-roses. J'ai cherché à mettre quelque chose de cela dans un des jardins peint en pleine pâte, jaune citron et vert citron.

(539)

The reference to the citron-yellow and citron-green garden identifies Vincent's image with the canvas, F.468. In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), while describing the pendant to this canvas represented by the drawing, F.1465, Vincent writes,

> Mais n'est-ce pas vrai, que ce jardin a un drôle de style, qui fait qu'on peut fort bien se représenter les poètes de la renaissance: le Dante, Pétrarque, Boccace, se baladant dans ces buissons sur l'herbe fleurie.

(541)
The image of Renaissance poets strolling through the park landscape that Vincent describes to Theo, becomes an integral and significant aspect of the two pendant canvases, transforming them from park gardens to The Poet's Garden, F.468, following the receipt of a letter from Gauguin in Pont Aven that describes a self portrait, (Les Misérables, WS. 239), he has painted at Vincent's request. In letter G10, (September, 1888), Gauguin writes,

Je me sens le besoin d'expliquer ce que j'ai voulu faire non pas que vous ne soyez apte à le deviner tout seul mais parce que je ne crois pas y être parvenu dans mon oeuvre. Le masque de bandit mal vêtu et puissant comme Jean Valjean qui a sa noblesse et sa douceur intérieure...et que la société opprime, a mis hors la loi, c'est l'image d'un impressioniste aujourd'hui...

(G10)

Vincent was deeply affected by Gauguin's pessimistic image of himself as the misunderstood outcast Jean Val Jean, who is seen by society as a criminal. In letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), to Theo, Vincent encloses Gauguin's letter and asks his brother to save it because of its importance, adding that Gauguin's description has moved him to the depths of his soul. In letter 545, (7 October, 1888), Vincent announces the receipt of Gauguin's Self Portrait: Les Misérables, and explains that in light of Gauguin's written explanation of this canvas, he sees this self portrait as indicative of the illness and depression Gauguin was undergoing in Point Aven.

Maintenant je viens de recevoir le portrait de Gauguin par lui même....
Vincent's interpretation of the Self Portrait: Les Miserables, as a melancholy statement of the artist's plight leads him to insist that Gauguin must not continue in his present situation, that, "il doit se consoler". This concern for Gauguin's state of mind reinforces Vincent's own feeling that he must work toward alleviating the poverty and poor living conditions suffered by artists. At the same time, Vincent feels certain that Gauguin's state of mind and health will improve once he comes to Arles, where he will be able to benefit from nourishing food and beautiful surroundings, and the peace and tranquility of the studio that Vincent wishes to establish.

Vincent is not so open in expressing his concern over Gauguin's health and state of mind to Gauguin himself. In letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), written the same day that Vincent receives letter G10, (September, 1888), containing the description of the Self Portrait: Les Misérables, Vincent remarks only that he understands the self portrait to be a symbol of impressionism in general, and that he looks forward to seeing the portrait itself. It is important that Vincent sees Gauguin's portrait as a symbol of impressionism. In letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), as if to pose an alternative to Gauguin's depressing vision
of both his role as an artist, and of the present and future state of impressionism, Vincent describes his own vision of the studio in the south, and the role Gauguin will play in effecting a renaissance in art. Vincent explains how he and Gauguin will be the principal residents of the studio, and that they will insure refuge and shelter to artist comrades when they are in need. Vincent emphasises that he wants Gauguin to share in this belief they will be founding a studio, that will last into the future. As further encouragement, Vincent asks Gauguin to consider himself the head of this enterprise, expressing the hope that this vision of an association that will help a generation of painters, will give some consolation to Gauguin, in his present state of poverty and illness. It is following this description of the vision of the studio in the south in letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), that Vincent relates that he has especially painted a decoration for Gauguin's bedroom called, "le jardin de la poète".

Ces pays-ci ont déjà vu et le culte de Vénus—essentiellement artistique en Grèce—puis les poètes et les artistes de la Renaissance. Là que ces choses ont pu fleurir, l'impressionisme le peut aussi.

Pour la chambre où vous logerez j'ai bien exprès fait une décoration, le jardin d'un poète (dans les croquis qu'a Bernard il y en a une première conception simplifiée ensuite). Le banal jardin public renferme des plantes et buissons qui font rêver aux paysages où l'on se représente volontiers Botticelli, Giotto, Pétrarque, le Dante et Boccace. Dans la décoration j'ai cherché à démêler l'essential de ce qui constitué le caractère immuable du pays.

Et j'eusse voulu peindre ce jardin de telle façon que l'on penserait à la fois au vieux poète d'ici (ou plutôt d'Avignon) Pétrarque et au nouveau poète d'ici—Paul Gauguin.

(553a)
The reference to an earlier sketch of the poet's garden subject in Bernard's possession in this passage is to a sketch of the park with the round clipped cedar shrub and the weeping tree that Vincent executed in the summer of 1888 after a painting of the same scene that was sent to Theo.  This reference enables Vincent's decoration of a Poet's Garden for Gauguin's room to be identified with the two canvases described above, that feature the weeping willow tree and the round clipped cedar shrub—F.468, and the lost canvas represented by the sketch, F.1465. It is significant that in describing the corner of the park that provided the subject for both these two studies to Theo, Vincent explained only that he associated this scene with a vision of Renaissance poets strolling over the grass. In writing to Gauguin, however, in letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), the image of the Renaissance poets Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio becomes firmly bound up with the park subject matter—a process that was likely brought about by Vincent's wish to inspire and encourage Gauguin with a positive vision of the future of his art, that would offset his pessimistic outlook capsulized in the Self Portrait: Les Misérables.

Vincent's description of the subject and meaning of this poet's garden decoration for Gauguin's room in letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), does present an inspiring vision. Vincent suggests that as Renaissance artists and poets flourished in the south, so too will impressionism and impressionist artists, such as Vincent and Gauguin. This metaphor reinforces the image of founding, "un atelier pour un renaissance", that Vincent had
attempted to outline to Gauguin in the first part of letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888). The renaissance imagery is important here. Several times through the preceding spring and summer, Vincent had expressed his belief in a coming rebirth and revitalization of art. In letter 489, (c. 19 May, 1888), Vincent writes: "Il y a dans l'avenir un art, et il doit être si beau, et si jeune, que vrai si actuellement nous y laissons notre jeunesse à nous, nous ne pouvons qu'y gagner en sérénité". In letter 514, (29 July, 1888), Vincent terms this new art of the future, a renaissance, and likens it to a green shoot springing from an old tree.

Considerant...le temps où nous vivons comme une renaissance vraie et grande de l'art, la tradition vermoulue et officielle qui est encore debout, mais qui est impuissante et fainéeante au fond les nouveaux peintres seules, pauvres, traités comme des fous...

Ces choses certes sont ainsi, mais cet art éternellement existant, et cette renaissance, ce rejeton vert sorti des racines du vieux tronc coupé, ce sont des choses si spirituelles, qu'une certaine mélancolie nous demeure en y songeant qu'a moins de frais on aurait pu faire de la vie, au lieu de faire de l'art.

Tu devrais bien, si tu peu, me faire que l'art est vivant....

(514)

Vincent's concept of the coming renaissance in art, couched in the imagery of the fresh green shoot, points to the rebirth imagery that is contained in the two Poet's Garden canvases. In describing both F.468 and its pendant, represented by F.1465, in letters 537, (16 or 17 September, 1888), and 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), Vincent describes the flowering oleanders that are part of the composition. In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), this oleander bush is described as covered in fresh flowers and constantly
renewing itself with new green shoots.

La rangée de buissons dans le fond sont tous de lauriers-roses....Elles sont chargées de fleurs fraîches et puis de tas de fleurs fanées, leur verdure également se renouvelle par de vigoureux jets nouveaux inépuisables en apparence. (541)

This image of rebirth is reinforces by Vincent's reference to the "cyprès funebre" that stands behind the flowering shrubs. The new growth which is the focus of both Poet's Garden canvases is thus able to suggest the theme of rebirth and renaissance, for as Vincent has indicated in letter 489, (c. 19 May, 1885), the art of the future will be new and young, and the contemplation of this vision provides a sense of serenity. This imagery is crucial to the studio. In letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), Vincent explains to Theo that if Gauguin is made to consider himself the head of the studio, then Gauguin like Vincent will wish to make the studio a living force. 350a

In describing the Poet's Garden decoration to Gauguin in letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), Vincent likens Gauguin to Petrarch, and calls him. "le nouveau poète d'ici". This reference reinforces the renaissance imagery that Vincent wishes to superimpose on his project for a studio in the south. At the same time Vincent makes use of a term that alludes to Gauguin's current aesthetic theory. The reference to Gauguin as the "nouveau poète d'ici", in letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), echoes Gauguin's own comments on the poetical nature of his art. In letter G 8, (September, 1888), (acknowledged by Vincent in letter 536, (c. 11-15 September, 1888), just prior to the painting of the first Poet's Garden, F. 468,), 351 Gauguin writes to Vincent,
Oui, vous avez raison de vouloir de la peinture avec une coloration suggestive d'idées poétiques et en ce sens je suis d'accord avec vous avec une différence, je ne connais pas d'idées poétiques... Je trouve tout poétique et c'est dans le coins de mon coeur, qui sont parfois mystérieux que j'entrevois la poésie. Les formes et les couleurs conduites en harmonies produisent d'elles mêmes une poésie. Sans me laisser surprendre par le motif je ressens devant le tableau d'un autre une sensation qui m'amène à un état poétique selon que les forces intellectuelles du peintres s'en dégagent.

(G8)

In a letter to Schuffenecker, M.LXXIII (6 October, 1888), Gauguin specifically characterizes himself as a poet, observing that while his art will be incomprehensible to some, "pour quelques uns je serais un poète". Similarly, the emphasis given by Vincent to the imaginative and visionary aspects of the landscape in Arles in letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), implied in the observation: "le banal jardin public renferme des plantes et buissons qui font rêver aux paysages où l'on se représente volontiers Botticelli, Giotto, Pétrarque, le Dante et Boccace", may also be seen as a deliberate response to Gauguin's current aesthetic that stressed abstraction, the use of the imagination, and advised dreaming in front of nature. In letter G6, (August, 1888), which Vincent appears to receive just prior to the writing of letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), Gauguin states: "L'art est un abstraction". This maxim corresponds to a longer observation written to Schuffenecher in MLXVII, (August, 1888), "Un conseil, ne peignez pas trop d'après nature. L'art est un abstraction, tiriez-là de nature et revant devant et pensez plus à la creation qui resultera...." In Gauguin's letter G9, (September, 1888), to
Vincent, he describes a recent canvas, *(The Vision after the Sermon)*, as the realization of a vision "n'existent que dans l'imagination des gens prière...." Vincent's decoration of the *Poet's Garden* for Gauguin's room, then, emerges as a direct response to the *Self Portrait: Les Misérables*, the canvas Gauguin intended to symbolize his own depression and as well, the unfortunate state of impressionist artists and impressionist art. To inspire Gauguin and to encourage him to come to Arles, Vincent describes in letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), a decoration for his room that is to lead Gauguin to think of Renaissance poets who have thrived in the south, an image that implies that the art of Gauguin and Vincent will similarly flourish in this locale. The link made between the "vieux poète d'ici...Pétrarque", and the, "nouveau poète d'ici Paul Gauguin", emphasizes that Gauguin's art will especially be benefited by the south.

A concern with suggestive colour appears to be at work in the two *Poet's Garden* canvases, F.468, and that represented by F.1465. In letter 539, (18 September, 1888), in which the image of Renaissance poets is first linked to the canvas, F.468, Vincent explains his concern with suggestive colour.

Mais mois—je dis franchement—je reviens plutôt à ce que je cherchais avant de venir à Paris, et je ne sais si quelqu'un avant moi ait parlé de couleur suggestive, mais Delacroix et Monticelli tout en n'en ayant pas parlé, l'ont faite. Mais moi je suis encore comme j'étais à Nuenen, lorsque j'ai fait un vain effort pour apprendre la musique, alors déjà
While this passage does not link a concern with suggestive colour to the canvas the *Poet's Garden*, F.468, two later references do. In letter 545, (7 October, 1888), Vincent writes that some of his recent work is salable, and adds: "Je sais que cela fera du bien à de certaines gens de retrouver les sujets poétiques,'le Ciel étoilé','les Pampres', 'les Sillons', 'le Jardin du poète'."

Again in letter 547, (8 October, 1888), Vincent asks Theo to recommend these same canvases, (*The Starry Night*, F.474, *The Vineyard*, F.475, the *Furrows*, F.574, and the *Poet's Garden*, F.468, and F.1465), to a prospective buyer as they are,"des paysages poétiques". The characterization of these five canvases as 'poetic landscapes' demands an assessment of Vincent's use of this term.

Vincent appears to have associated the suggestive use of colour with the suggestive properties of poetry. In letter W9, (c. 2 December, 1888), the colours in a recent canvas, *Memory of the Garden at Etten*, F.496, are described and then likened to a poem.

Voilà, je sais que cela n'est peut-être guère ressemblant, mais, pour moi, cela me rend le caractère poétique et le style de jardin que je le sens....le choix voulu de la couleur, le violet sombre violemment taché par le citron des dahlias, me suggère la personnalité de la mère.

... Je ne sais si tu comprendras que l'on puisse dire de la poésie rien qu'en bien arrangeant des couleurs, comme on peut dire des choses consolantes en musique.

(W9)
The ability of colour to suggest "l'idées poétiques" appear to have been also discussed with Gauguin, as a response from Gauguin in letter G8, (September, 1888), indicates.

Oui, vous avez raison de vouloir de la peinture avec une coloration suggestive d'idées poétiques et en ce sens je suis d'accord avec vous avec une différence, je ne connais pas d'idées poétiques c'est un probablement un sens qui me manque. Je trouve tout poétique....

What is comprised by "l'idées poétiques" that Vincent sees as being conveyed by suggestive colour emerges in letter 531, (3 September, 1888), to Theo. Here Vincent explains that various emotions, sentiments, and feelings may be suggested by various colour relationships.

Exprimer l'amour de deux amoureux par un mariage de deux complémentaires, leur mélange et leurs oppositions, des vibrations mystérieuses des tons rapprochés. Exprimer la pensée d'un front par rayonnement d'un ton clair sur un fond sombre.

Exprimer l'espérance par quelqu'étoilé. L'ardeur d'un être par un rayonnement de soleil couchant. Ce n'est pas certes pas là du trompe l'œil réaliste mais n'est-ce pas une chose réellement existante?

It seems fair to presume that the "idées poétiques", that Vincent sees colour as able to suggest, are similar to emotions and concepts outlined in the passage above: "l'amour", "la pensée", "l'espérance", "l'ardeur". Vincent's description of the Poet's Garden, F.468 and F.1465, the Furrows, F.574, and the Vineyard, F.475, as, "les sujets poétiques" in letter 545, (7 October, 1888), and, "des paysages poétiques" in letter 547, (8 October, 1888), implies some concern with colour that conveys these, or similar
emotions or concepts. In the Poet's Garden, F.468, the predominant colours are citron and green; \(^{358}\) in the Poet's Garden represented by F.1465, they are described as cobalt-blue and citron. \(^{359}\) It is difficult to discern in the case of these two canvases, precisely how these particular colours are to suggest the renaissance theme, and as Vincent does not elaborate on how colour is to be expressive in these two works; it will only be suggested here that the rich exaggerated colours may allude to the future art of colour that Vincent foresees. \(^{360}\)

The technique of a thick impasto used to express the colour areas in both canvases \(^{361}\) does, however, take on a significance when juxtaposed with the renaissance imagery of the two canvases.

In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), this impasto is likened to Monticelli's technique, Vincent adding that he feels he is carrying on Monticelli's work: "Les études actuelles sont réellement d'une seule coulée de pâte... involontairement je suis obligé d'y empâter à la Monticelli. Parfois je crois réellement continuer cet homme-là". Vincent's concern with carrying on Monticelli's work is closely bound to his vision of establishing a studio in the south with Gauguin as he explains in letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888).

Mois j'ai écrit à notre soeur et à toi tu te rappelles... que je continuais Monticelli ici. Bon, mais tu vois actuellement, cet atelier en question, nous le fondons.

Ce que fera Gauguin, ce que moi aussi je ferai, cela se tiendra avec cette belle ouvrage de Monticelli et nous cherchons à prouver aux bonnes personnes que Monticelli n'est pas mort avachi sur les tables des cafés de la Cannebière... mais que le petit bonhomme
Vincent's insistence that he is carrying on Monticelli's work refers to his concept of the studio as both a continuation of Monticelli's work in the south as a colorist, and as a refuge that would guard artists against poverty and loneliness that Monticelli in his last years faced. Within this context, Vincent's use of a thick impasto, "à la Monticelli", in the two Poet's Garden canvases, F.468, and that represented by F.1465, suggests that this technique, with its allusion to the artist whose work the studio was to carry on, may have been intended to reassert the vision of a rebirth in art that the Poet's Garden canvases were intended to convey.

The Furrows, F.574

A letter, sketch, and a written description in letter 541a, (26 or 27 September, 1888), announce the completion of the size 30 canvas that Vincent refers to as The Ploughed Field, (le Champ labouré), or The Furrows, (Les Sillons), F.574. The subject of this canvas is a view of freshly ploughed fields that recede into the distance. A border of green trees and farm buildings on the horizon separates this area of ploughed earth from the pale blue sky and white clouds above. A small figure with horse and plough is barely discernable in the middle left of the vast area of brown earth.
The deliberate focus on a large expanse of northing but freshly turned over earth seems a strange and bland subject. To render this field, however, Vincent uses a thick impasto and a particularly dynamic brushwork that works soft pastel tints into the various pale browns. The result is that Vincent's brushwork suggests the individual clods of earth, and as well, mixes together various tints on the canvas giving subtle nuances of colour to the various parts of the field. In the immediate foreground, the furrows that cut diagonally across the canvas are rendered with large comma-like brushstrokes, and a muted yellow-brown accents the pale brown and green strokes that delineate the individual lumps of earth. The clods of earth in the two large ploughed fields that recede into the distance toward the horizon, are indicated by broad and thickly impastoed horizontal or curved brushstokes in muted greens or browns. In this middle ground area, these colours are mixed together by the impastoed brushwork, emerging sometimes to highlight the ridge of brushstrokes or becoming mixed with another colour of the field to produce a soft nuance. Indeed this sea of ploughed earth is set in motion by the dizzying effect of the impasto as the pigment ridges that are created suggest a wave-like motion that is amplified by the many colour nuances. The pale blue sky with white clouds above this field reinforces this effect as both sky and clouds are rendered in thick pigment and comma-like brushwork. The result is that the entire canvas surface, although rendered in soft pastel colours, pulsates and vibrates because of the textured impasto surface.
In letter 541a, (26 or 27 September, 1888), Vincent describes the colour in this canvas simply.

Un ciel bleu avec nuages blancs.
Un immense terrain d'un lilas cendré, des sillons, des mottes inombrables, l'horizon de collines bleues et de buissons verts avec petits mas à tuiles orangées.

(541a)

In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), that follows this letter, Vincent speaks more enthusiastically about the colour effects in this canvas.

Milliet était aujourd'hui content de ce qui je fais, mais parce que les mottes de terre sont doux de couleur comme un paire de sabots, cela ne le choquait pas, avec le ciel myosotis à flocons de nuages blancs.

(541a)

The reference here to a soft colour like "une paire de sabots" to describe the muted browns in the canvas, The Furrows, F.574, recalls Vincent's use of a similar phrase in Nuenen in 1885, "son paysan semble peint avec la terre qu'il ensemence", to describe earth colours formed from an admixture of complementaries. It was pointed out in the chapter on Vincent's use of colour at Nuenen that Vincent felt that the grays, browns, and neutral colours formed in this way were more alive than those taken straight from the tube, and because of this, best able to express the living quality of the earth, and the peasants whose lives were so closely bound to labours on the soil. Vincent's continued concern with the expressive potential of various complementary relationships has been outlined in the previous analysis of the individual canvases of the decoration.
This concern, and as well Vincent's observation in letter 539, (18 September, 1888), that he is concerned with suggestive colour and returning to the concepts underlying the colour experiments made in Nuenen, suggests that the use of the soft browns and neutral colours used in *The Furrows*, F. 574, which in fact appear to be broken colours produced by varied admixtures of comple­mentaries, is probably tied to Vincent's wish to express the brown earth as a vital and living substance.

The above interpretation accounts for the descriptions of *The Furrows*, F. 574, as one of the "sujets poétiques", in letter 545, (7 October, 1888), and one of the "paysages poétiques" in letter 547, (8 October, 1888), as colour here conveys a particular concept. The significance of colour and technique in this canvas, and the "idée poétique" they are to convey may be further amplified by an examination of Vincent's concerns at the time this canvas was painted. In letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), Vincent remarks that he feels certain Theo will like his two recent canvases, *The Furrows*, F. 574, and *The Starry Night*, F. 474, because, "cela est plus calme que d'autre toiles", adding that he feels people will take to his work, "si la technique continuait à être plus harmonieuse", and that he aims at a brushwork, "se tiennent et s'enlacent bien avec sentiment, comme une musique jouée avec emotion". Two letters written in this period appear to provide the context for Vincent's observation that his canvas of the ploughed field has a calmness or quiet, and that he wishes his technique to impart a certain harmony or musical quality. In letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888), Vincent explains that
he has read an article on Tolstoi. In this letter Vincent indicates that he understands Tolstoi's philosophy and religion as based on the concept of man's life as carried on by humanity—"mais l'homme mort, et bien mort, reste toujours l'humanité vivante". In letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), Tolstoi's view of man's resurrection through humanity is referred to again.

Il paraît ne beaucoup croire à une résurrection soit du corps soit de l'âme.

... Et s'il ne croit pas à la résurrection, il paraît croire à l'équivalent—la durée de la vie—la marche de l'humanité—l'homme et l'œuvre continuées infailliblement presque par l'humanité de la génération à venir.

(543)

Vincent also notes in this letter that Tolstoi believes in peaceful revolution caused, "par la le besoin d'amour et de religiosité qui doit par réaction au scepticisme et de la souffrance désespérée et désespérante se manifester dans les gens". As part of Tolstoi's effort to bring about a peaceful revolution, Vincent describes how Tolstoi returned to the land: "Lui-même gentilhomme s'est fait ouvrier, sait faire des bottes, sait réparer les poêles, sait mener la charrue et bêcher la terre." This image of Tolstoi as ploughman and labourer of the earth seems to underly Vincent's observations in letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888), that "il nous faut revenir à la nature malgré notre éducation et notre travail...."

Vincent clearly finds Tolstoi's vision of love and work on earth, and his vision of man's work carried on by the continuum of humanity, a comforting one. In letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888), he writes of Tolstoi's philosophy,
...je crois que sa religion ne doit pas être cruelle et augmenter nos souffrances, mais au contraire cela doit être très consolant et doit inspirer de la sérénité et l'activité et le courage de vivre....

(542)

He adds later in this same letter that Tolstoi's new religion will have, "le même effet de consoler, de rendre la vie possible...", as Christianity, and will provide an alternative to the cynicism, scepticism of modern life.

Vincent's enthusiasm for Tolstoi's belief in a promising future for mankind, and in a future life lived close to nature, points to his own need for a consoling vision. The Furrows, F.574, within this framework, has several implications. The subject of this canvas, the freshly tilled soil, implies the cycle of growth and suggests man's own closeness to, and harmony with, nature's cycles. The colour that renders the tilled earth reinforces the sense of harmony implied by subject matter. In terms of Vincent's private colour symbolism, the mixed complementaries are as harmonious as a balanced complementary pair, and in conjunction with images of peasants and the earth imply the vital bond between the two. In letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), Vincent describes the thick impasto and brushwork in both The Furrows, F.574, and The Starry Night, F.474, as a harmonious technique which he likens to music.

Je ne serais pas surpris si tu aimerais la Nuit étoilée et les Champs labourés, cela est plus calme que d'autres toiles. Si le travail marchait toujours comme cela, j'aurais moins d'inquiétudes pour l'argent, car les gens y viendraient plus facilement si la technique continuait à être plus harmonieuse.
Mais ce sacre mistral est bien gênant pour faire des touches qui se tiennent et s'enlaçent bien avec sentiment, comme une musique jouée avec emotion.

(543)

This description no doubt refers to the rhythmically textured paint surface in The Furrows, F. 574, which reinforces the harmony of colour and subject matter. These aspects, in conjunction with Vincent's sense of tranquility and consolation provided by the image of the progress of man into future generations, no doubt account for Vincent's explanation in letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), that Theo will find in The Furrows F. 574, a greater sense of calm.

The Starry Night, F. 474.

In letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), Vincent describes another size 30 canvas, The Starry Night, F. 474, (plate 7). This canvas depicts two figures, a man and a woman walking on the banks of the Rhône in the foreground of the composition. Beyond them, the bank of the river curves to form a small bay on the other side of which the city lights of Arles gleam. Above is a dark blue night sky punctuated with gleaming stars. A thick impasto is used throughout the canvas. A tight pattern of short, broad horizontal and vertical brushstrokes renders the blue of the night sky that is purest and darkest at the top and sides of the canvas and is softened to a paler blue towards the lower part of the sky that is centred over the town of Arles. Soft yellow-white dots of pigment emanating pale yellow rays punctuate this impastoed
grid of horizontal and vertical brushstrokes. The curve of the river bank and the silhouettes of the buildings of Arles pick up the rich blue of the sky zenith, and impastoed areas of yellow-gold signify the lights of the town. The blue of the river is rendered in thin horizontal brushstrokes of dark blue and pale blue and short horizontal dashes of yellow-gold indicate the reflection of the town lights on the water surface. The foreground area of river bank blends with the blue of the sky and river as small dashes of a light blue-violet pigment are applied over the green and brown of the bank, and over the darker blue of the water surface. The man and woman in the foreground are rendered in dark blue and black.

In describing this canvas to Theo in letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), Vincent notes the various blues, greens and violets used to depict the black night, and emphasizes as well the contrast between the soft light of the stars, and the glare of the gas lights of the town.

Ci-inclus petit croquis d'une toile de 30 carrée, enfin le ciel étoilé peint la nuit même sous en bec de gaz. Le ciel est bleu vert, l'eau est bleu de roi, les terrains sont mauves. La ville est bleue et violette, le gaz est jaune et des reflets sont or roux et descendent jusqu'au bronze vert. Sur le champ bleu vert du ciel, la Grand Ourse a un scintillement vert et rose, dont la pâleur discrète contraste avec l'or brutal du gaz.
Deux figurines colorées d'amoureux à l'avant-/plan.

(543)

A description to Boch in letter 553b, (4 October, 1888), similarly emphasizes the rich colours in this canvas and the
contrast between star and city light.

... une étude du Rhône, de la ville éclairée au gaz et se reflétant dans la rivière bleue. Avec le ciel étoilé dessus - avec la Grand Ourse - à scintillement rose et vert sur le champ bleu de cobalt du ciel nocturne, tandis que la lumière de la ville et ses reflets brutaux sont d'un or rouge et d'un vert bronze. Peint la nuit.

(553b)

Over the spring and summer of 1888 Vincent had several times indicated to Theo, Bernard, and Wil, that he longed to paint the subject of a starry sky.\(^{373}\) Much of Vincent's attraction to this subject is based on a perception of the rich and varied hues apparent at night. In letter 499,(22 June, 1888), written from Saintes-Maries, Vincent describes a walk at night along the deserted beach.

\[
\text{Le ciel d'un bleu profond était tacheté de nuages d'un bleu plus profonde que le bleu fondamental d'un cobalt intense, et d'autres d'un bleu plus clair.... Dans le fond bleu les étoiles scintillaient claires, verdies, jaunes, blanches, roses plus claires, diamantées davantage comme des pierres précieuses que chez nous-même Paris - c'est donc le cas de dire: opales, émeraudes, lapis, rubis, saphirs.}
\]

(499)

In letter W 7,(9 and 16 September), to Wil, Vincent also describes the subject of a starry sky in terms of rich colours, "des violets, des bleus, des verts les plus intense."\(^{374}\)

The image of stars or a starry sky is also associated with considerations of man's role on earth in relation to the possibility of his continued existence in some future life. For Vincent, as has been pointed out already, this concept
of future life involves not only a vision of life after
death, but a sense of the work of humanity continued by
future generations and therefore providing a vision of the
infinite. In letter 506, (c. 16 July, 1888), Vincent questions
whether the ability of artists to speak to following
generations through their work is the only life after death
and adds,

Moi je déclare ne pas en savoir quoi que ce 
soit, mais toujours la vue des étoiles me fait 
rêver aussi simplement que me donnent à rêver 
les points noirs représentant sur la carte....
Pourquoi me dis-je, les points lumineux du 
firmament nous seraient-elles moins accessibles 
que les points noirs sur la carte de France?
Si nous prenons le train pour nous rendre 
à Tarascon ou à Rouen, nous prenons la mort 
pour aller dans une étoile....

(506)

In letter 474, (9 April, 1888), when Vincent describes his plan
for, "une nuit étoilée avec du cyprès ou peut-être au dessus 
d'un champ de blé mûr", this statement follows immediately
upon a discussion of the death of Anton Mauve, and a reference
to the pink blossoming peach tree, an apparent symbol of
ongoing life, that Vincent had dedicated to Mauve's memory. 375

In letter B 7, (c. 28 June, 1888), Vincent's querie: "Mais
quand donc ferai-je le ciel-étoilé", ce tableau que toujours
me préoccupe?", follows a reference to, "des aspirations
vers cet infini dout le semeur, la gerbe sont les symboles...."

In September of 1888 Vincent also associates stars with his
consideration of future life and the infinite. In letter 543,
(c. 28 September, 1888), that announces the size 30 canvas
of the *Starry Night*, F. 474, Vincent also discusses Tolstoï's philosophy of, "la durée de la vie-la marche de l'humanité - l'homme et l'oeuvre continues infailliblement presque par l'humanité de la génération à venir", and outlines his own need for, "quelque chose de tranquillisant et qui nous consolât de façon que nous cessions de nous sentir coupables ou malheureux et que tels quels nous pourrions marcher sans nous pourrions marcher sans nous égater dans la solitude ou le néant". That this need for a consoling and meaningful vision of life verges on a desire for religion is not missed by Vincent, and again he relates this need to his vision of the stars. Following a description of two recently completed canvases, of which the *Starry Night*, F. 474 is one, he adds,

> Et cela me fait du bien de faire du dur. Cela n'empêche, que j'ai un besoin terrible de - dirai-je le mot - de religion - alors ju vais la nuit dehors pour piendre les étoiles...

(543)

The relationship between Vincent's vision of the stars in the context of speculations on future life, the infinite, and their relationship to life on earth, and the actual canvas of the *Starry Night*, F. 474, is clarified in a letter to Wil, W 8 , (c. 26 August, 1888). Vincent here asks his sister if she has read any of Walt Whitman's verse, providing at the same time a précis of the poet's philosophy

> As tu déjà lu les poésies américaines de Whitman ... Il voit dans l'avenir et même dans le présent un monde de santé, d'amour charnel large et franc - d'amité - de travail
Vincent understands Whitman, then, as posing a meaningful
and ordered vision of life: Man on earth is occupied with
work, love, and friendship; god and eternity, represented by
the starry skies, are in their rightful place above the world.
It is worth noting that several of Whitman's poems deal
specifically with an image of a starry sky within the context
of the contemplation of death, immortality, and eternity - all
concepts that relate finally to measure of man's life on
earth. The following poem excerpts give an indication of
the tenor of this imagery.

On the Beach at Night Alone (1856)
...
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought
of the clef of the universes and of the future.
...
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and
enclose them. 376

On the Beach at Night (1871)
On the beach at night,
Stands a child with her father,
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness
...
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the
hand of her father
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not child,

... The ravening clouds shall not be victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky...
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch
again another night, the Pleiades
shall emerge,
They are immortal, all those stars ... 
The great stars and the little ones shall shine
out again, they endure,

Something there is

Something that shall endure longer even
than lustrous Jupiter

Or the radiant sisters of the Pleiades. 377

Night on the Prairies (1860)

... I walk by myself - stand and look at the stars...
Now I absorb immortality and peace
I admire death and test propositions
... I was thinking this globe enough till
there sprang out so noiseless around me
myriads of other globes.

Now while great thoughts of space and eternity fill
me I will measure myself by them.

... 378

A Clear Midnight (1881)
This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the
wordless,
Away from books, away from art, the day erased,
the lesson done.
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing
pondering the themes thou lovest best,
Night, sleep, death and the stars. 379
The similarity between Whitman's starry sky imagery and Vincent's over the spring and summer of 1888 is immediately apparent. In conjunction with the reference in W 8, (c. 26 August, 1888), to Whitman's positive vision of love and work under a starry heaven, and Vincent's own cry for a consoling and meaningful vision of the world that is linked to the contemplation of the stars in letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), in which The Starry Night, F. 474, is announced, the suggestion arises that this canvas may in part be a reference to the consoling vision of man that Whitman presents. The promising future and intimation of god and immortality that Whitman signifies in his star imagery, coincides with Vincent's own needs, and appears to become an integral part of his own vision expressed in the Starry Night, F. 474. Even the lovers in this canvas may be seen as related to what Vincent describes as Whitman's concept of, "d'amour charnel-d'amitié-de travail avec le grand firmament étoilé... au-dessus de ce monde." It is possibly due to the tranquilizing and consoling vision that is part of Vincent's image of two lovers walking under a starry sky that leads him to suggest in letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888) that Theo will find a sense of quiet and calm in this canvas, as well as The Furrows, F. 574. While Vincent indicates that part of this effect is achieved by a harmonious brushwork, which in turn works rich colour
harmonies, it appears that both the *Starry Night*, F. 474, and *The Furrows*, F. 574, derive much of their quiet and calm from the harmonious view of man's existence that is presented in each.

The *Vineyard*, F. 475.

In letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), in which Gauguin's letter describing his *Self Portrait: Les Misérables* is enclosed and discussed, Vincent refers to a study of vineyards, *The Vineyard*, F. 475, (plate 8), and later in the postscript describes this recently completed canvas.

> Ah! mon étude des vignes, j'ai sué sang et eau dessus, mais je l'ai, toujours toile de 30 carrée, toujours pour la décoration de la maison."
>
> ... Les vignes que je viens de peindre, sont vertes, pourpres, jaunes, à grappes violettess à sarments noirs et orangées.
> À l'horizon quelques saules gris bleu, et le pressoir bien, bien loin, à toit rouge et silhouette de ville lilas lointaine.
>
> Dans la vigne des figurines de dames à ombrelles, rouges et d'autres figurines d'ouvriers vendangeurs avec leur charrette
> Un ciel bleu dessus et un avant - plan de sable gris.

(544)

In letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), to Gauguin, written on the same day, Vincent gives a similar description of this canvas, and also indicates that is for the decoration of the house. 382

The composition of *The Vineyard*, F. 475, is akin to that of *The Furrows*, F. 574, in that the view is a large
area of field that is bordered by rows of trees, with an expanse of sky above. While in the canvas of the vineyard a simple field stretches farther into the distance, both compositions are rendered in a thick impasto that gives to both sky and field below a rich and detailed texture. In the foreground of the vineyard, the foremost bushes of four rows of vines are rendered in detail; behind and beside these, rows of vines recede into the distance. Figures are discernable in the left middle ground, bending over and walking through the vines. The most prominent are two figures of women in long dresses, each with a red parasol. The colours in this canvas are rich and heavy autumnal colours, and not the soft pastels of The Furrows, F. 574. The sky above the vines is rendered in an impasto that blends, with short broad and curved strokes, a dark blue at the top of the canvas, with white and a yellow green in the sky above the horizon. In the foreground of the field, leaves of the grape vines are rendered in thick touches of dark green and green black pigment. The vine branches are traced in black and orange, and serve to clarify the individual vine bushes. The grape clusters are indicated by impastoed touches of a dark violet that are almost indistinguishable from the dark green and black of the grape leaves. As the rows of grapes recede into the distance, an interwoven surface pattern of green-brown, lilac, and gold, represent the mass of growth; in the far
distance, the rows are indicated by a solid thickly impastoed
green interspersed with rows of gold or brown. Except for
the two standing women in the middle left of the composition
that carry bright red parasols, the figures that work in
the field, indicated by impastoed touches of white, blue,
or black, are engulfed by the thick impasto of green and gold.
Vincent has indicated the heavy weight of the grape vines in
his canvas by setting the foremost vine bushes upon an area
of green and gray impastoed foreground at the bottom of the
canvas, thereby accentuating the leaves and branches that
bend to, and lie upon the ground weighted down by their heavy
load.

Since the summer of 1888 Vincent had anticipated
painting the vineyards. In letter 504,(c. 7 July, 1888),
Vincent explains that as the orchards and wheatfields repre­
sent spring and summer subject matter, so the vineyards
characterize the autumn. At the same time he indicates that
this autumn motif promises a change in the colours that up
until that time have dominated his canvases.

Les blés, cela a été une occasion de
travailler comme les vergeurs en fleurs.
Et je n'ai que juste le temps pour me pré­
parer pour la nouvelle campagne, celle des
vignes.
Et entre les deux je voudrais encore faire
des marines.
Les vergers représentait le rose et le blanc,
les blés le jaune, les marines le bleu.
Peut-être que maintenant je vais un peu
chercher des verts. Or l'automne, cela donne
toute la gamme de la lyre.

(504)
To Boch, in letter 553b, (4 October, 1888), while working on this canvas, Vincent does describe his subject as, "un beau motif de couleur", rendered in, "toute pourprée jaune-vert sous le ceil bleu." It is perhaps because this canvas emphasizes these greens, yellow greens, and purples that Vincent described The Vineyard, F. 475, as a pendant, "au jardin avec le buisson en boule et les lauriers-roses" in letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888). The garden that Vincent refers to here is no doubt the lost canvas represented by the sketch F. 1465. Like the canvas of the vineyard this park garden is described in terms of greens and yellows under a blue sky. As well, the mass of red and pink flowering oleanders described as a major aspect of this park garden suggest a comparison with the mass of purple grapes in the vineyard landscape. Both canvases also feature two women with parasols walking in the middle distance. Although Vincent seems to have changed his mind concerning these two canvases as pendants, (letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888), written to Gauguin on the same day, but after letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), is sent to Theo, describes the Poet's Garden, F. 468 and F. 1465, as decorations for Gauguin's bedroom), the initial juxtaposition of the vineyard with the park garden study, "avec le buisson en boule et les lauriers-roses", in letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), underlines the mutual focus on the rich colours of the autumn landscape.
While *The Vineyard*, F. 475, as a subject is not as easily analyzed as either *The Furrows*, F. 574, or the *Starry Night* F. 474, the image of labour, fruitfullness, and the promise of regeneration which the subject matter implies may be part of the "idées poétiques" that lead Vincent to identify this canvas, like *The Poet's Garden*, F. 468 and F. 1465, *The Furrows*, F. 574, and the *Starry Night*, F. 474, as one of the "paysages poétiques". 385

*The House*, F. 464.

In letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1883), Vincent encloses a sketch of, "une toile 30 carrée representant la maison et son entourage sous un soliel de souffre sous un ciel de cobalt pur." This canvas, *The House*, F. 464, (plate 9), comprises a view of Vincent's rented house, and the buildings beside and behind it. The view is taken from the house; the block in which the Yellow House is situated is thereby placed in the middle distance of the composition. The angle at which the block of buildings is set allows the street in front of Vincent's house, and as well the long street that runs beside the house and which disappears under two railway bridges that cut horizontally across the composition in the background, to be depicted. In terms of colour this composition may be divided into two halves. The upper half is the rich cobalt blue of the sky, rendered in an impasto
that is textured with horizontal and vertical brushstrokes. The lower half of this composition is dominated by the yellows and oranges that depict the buildings and streets. The front of the Yellow House is rendered in a pale yellow impasto, with the door and window shutters a bright green, and the window panes indicated in a dark blue-black. The upper part of the two storey building to the left of Vincent's house that faces onto the same street, is rendered in pale orange with its windows, cornices, and lower store front indicated in a darker orange. Behind Vincent's house the side of a taller four storey building is also depicted in these colours, with the dark orange roof set against the cobalt blue sky. The side of the Yellow House, the front of the four storey building, and those that recede into the distance beyond it, are rendered in a muted green-white that indicates the shade on this side of the street. The streets themselves that run in front of the Yellow House, and beside it toward the two railway bridges in the background, are rendered in a yellow-gray impasto over which are applied short horizontal dashes of orange. Numerous figures are depicted in this canvas. A woman and a figure seated in a chair lounge under the pink awning of the orange building that stands beside the Yellow House facing out toward the viewer, and a man walks along the sidewalk toward them. A man woman and child walk together down the middle of the street that runs beside Vincent's house, and several figures
are seated at café tables on an awninged terrace in front of the four storey building that faces onto this street.

In describing this canvas to Theo, Vincent emphasized the effect of intense yellow sunlight on these buildings and also pointed out the location of certain of his haunts in relation to the Yellow House.

... une toile de 30 carrée représentant la maison et son entourage sous un soleil de soufre, sous un ciel de cobalt pur. Le motif est d'un dur!... Car c'est terrible, ces maisons jaunes dans le soleil, et puis l'incomparable fraîcheur du bleu. Tout le terrain et jaune aussi... la maison à gauche est rose à volets verts, celle qui est ombragée par un arbre.
C'est là le restaurant où je vais dîner tous les jours, mon ami le facteur reste au fond de la rue à gauche, entre les deux ponts du chemin de fer. Le café de nuit que j'ai peint, n'est pas dans la tableau, il est à gauche du restaurant.

(543)

The significance of the Yellow House to Vincent in effecting a stable working environment that would provide a refuge for other artists, and ultimately create a firm foundation for an artistic renaissance has been pointed out already. 386 As such the Yellow House seems an obvious subject for a painted canvas, and Vincent had in fact intended to render this subject for some time. 387 Because the Yellow House symbolized for Vincent his vision of a studio in the south that would effect an association of painters 388 and a refuge that would provide artists such as himself and Gauguin with an alternative to the debilitating life lived in hotels and cafés, 389 references to the peace and tranquility that
the house provides are frequent. In letter 532, (4 September, 1888) following a discussion of the possibility, of Gauguin not coming to Arles 390 Vincent remarks: "Que je voudrais m'établir de façon a avoir un chez-moi. ". Vincent adds that the Goncourt brothers, in buying their home, also purchased "leur tranquilité," for the sum of 100,000 francs; he and Theo he argues can acquire tranquility, "à moins de mille en tant que d'avoir un atelier dans le midi où nous pourrions loger quelqu'un." The purchase of furnishings for the house is discussed in letter 534, (9 September, 1888), and it is explained that these are to have character. The beds Vincent adds will provide, "un aspect de solidité, de durée, de calme...." This emphasis on the calm and tranquility of the Yellow House is reaffirmed in letter 535, (10 September, 1888), where Vincent explains, that the vision of the house as a habitable place, "cela continue de m'apaiser beaucoup...." He adds at a later point: "Je reviens toujours là-dessus qu'une fois fixé, on travaille plus tranquillement." In letter 540, (c. September, 1888), Vincent explains that much of the tranquility he finds in the Yellow House stems from his belief that he is preparing a studio for the future and that to work better present day artists must be settled and calm.

Tu ne saurais croire combien cela me tranquillise, j'ai tellement l'amour de faire une maison d'artiste....

... La grande tranquillité que me procure la
maison est surtout ceci que, dès maintenant je me sens travailler en prenant des précautions d'avenir, après moi un autre peinture trouvera une affaire en train.

... L'art dans lequel nous travaillons, nous sentons que cela a un long avenir, et il faut donc être établi comme ceux-ci sont calmes et non pas vivre comme les décadents.

(540)

The tranquility that Vincent finds through the Yellow House recalls the demand for a consoling and comforting vision of both present life, and the future that is presented in letters 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888), and 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), and which has been discussed in reference to The Furrows, F. 574, and the Starry Night, F. 474. That Vincent explains in letter 540, (c. 22 September, 1888), in the passage quoted above, that he sees his work as a preparation for the future, no doubt accounts for the serenity the Yellow House provides. Indeed in letter 538, (18 September, 1888), Vincent explains that the Yellow House, in preparing the way for future generations of painters, affords him a view of the infinite, which in turn allows him to work with serenity.

... Mais mon idée serait qu'au bout du compte on eussé fondé et laisserait à la postérité un atelier ou pourrait vivre un successeur.

... Or si moi je fonde un atelier abri à l'entrée même du midi, cela n'est pas si bête. Et justement cela fait que nous pouvons travailler sereinement.

... Si ce que l'on fait donne sur l'infini, si on voit le travail avoir sa raison d'être et continuer au-delà, on travaille plus sereinement.

(538)
While Vincent does not discuss the role of colour in the canvas, *The House*, F. 464, (and indeed colour may not be intended to suggest anything but a blue sky and yellow buildings), it is interesting to compare this canvas with that of the *Night Café*, F. 463, which Vincent refers to several times as exhibiting a use of suggestive and expressive colour. As has been pointed out in the discussion of the *Night Café*, F. 463, Vincent intended, "un combat et une antithèse des verts et des rouges les plus différents", in an atmosphere "de fournaise infernale, de soufre pâle", to suggest the disquieting environment where one could go mad and commit a crime. The Yellow House that is to be the alternative to living in such cafés like madmen or criminals, and which provides Vincent with tranquility and calm, is rendered in terms of the complementary pair, blue and yellow-orange. This colour arrangement presents a complementary pair that as well as suggesting balance, represents a complementary pair that is, for Vincent, particularly characteristic of the south. In letter B 6,(c. 24 June, 1888), to Bernard Vincent remarks on the colours of the midi "Pas de bleu sans jaune et sans orangé, et si vous faites le bleu, faites donc le jaune, l'orangé aussi, n'est-ce pas!" At the same time, all complementary pairs harmoniously complete each other, "qui se marient, qui se complètent comme l'homme et la femme se complètent," as Vincent explains to Wil in letter W 4,(c. 24-28 June, 1888). Given Vincent's
pervasive concern with the expressive potential of colour relationships at the this time, and his firm belief in the logical balance of complementary pairs, it seems possible that the harmony and balance that is an integral part of the blue and yellow-orange combination in the canvas The House, F. 464, is intended to convey the tranquility and peace that characterize Vincent's response to his work for his studio and refuge.

The Tarascon Dilligence, F. 478a.

Among the four size 30 canvases listed in letter 552, (13 October, 1888) as having been completed in the preceeding week is one Vincent relates to Daudet's novel, Tartarin de Tarascon.

As-tu déjà relu les Tartarin, ah, ne l'oublie pas! Te rapelles-tu dans Tartarin la complainte de la vieille diligence de Tarascon, cette admiral page? Eh bien, je viens de la peindre cette voiture rouge et verte, dans la cour de l'auberge. Tu verras. (552)

Vincent's canvas, The Tarascon Dilligence, F. 478a, (plate 10), depicts two stage coaches in an inn courtyard. The details and colours of the foremost coach-white wheels in the sunlight and yellow in the shade, bright green hood and seat, and a blue green and red body outlined in black - are set off against the gray impastoed foreground, and the yellow wall of the inn behind the coach. The second coach, with bright green hood, yellow wheels, and black body, is also set
against a yellow mass of bushes, and a flat yellow wall. A small patch of intense blue impastoed sky in the upper right of the composition is glimpsed over the building tops. The foremost coach has the name "service de Tarascon" printed in yellow, on a red band across its side. In describing this canvas in letter 552, (13 October, 1888), Vincent emphasizes the bright colours and thick impasto.

Ce croquis hâtif t'en donne la composition, avant-plan simple de sable gris, fond aussi très simple, murailles roses et jaunes avec fenêtres à persiennes vertes, coin de ciel bleu. Les deux voitures très colorées, vert, rouge, roues-jaunes, noir bleu, orangé. Toile de 30 toujours. Les voitures sont peint à la Monticelli avec des empâtements. (552)

The reference to the complaint of the Tarascon diligence that Vincent indicates this subject alludes, is to a passage in Daudet's novel, Tartarin de Tarascon, that relates the adventures of the would-be hunter Tartarin, who has travelled to northern Africa in pursuit of lions that have long disappeared from such a civilized area. Numerous humourous adventures befall Tartarin throughout the novel and underline the naive and innocent attitude of this citizen of Provence. In the chapter in which the Tarascon diligence appears, Tartarin, to the amusement of the passengers on board, enters an old coach dressed in his lion hunting gear. As the coach bumps along, and Tartarin envisions his dramatic confrontation with ferocious lions, he gradually falls asleep and hears the voice of the coach, rusty with age address him. The
coach who used to ply the Tarascon to Nîmes run in France, explains that she recognizes Tartarin. Her creaky springs sigh for, "le temps de la jeunesse", when she was well cared for and polished, and used to excite praise from onlookers in Tarascon. Now, worn out and shipped to Algeria where she rusts away and is mistreated, she laments her glorious past. That Vincent links his canvas with the complaint of the Tarascon diligence in Daudet's Tartarin de Tarascon associates The Tarascon Diligence, F. 478a, with the autumnal subject matter that is part of the decoration canvases as a whole. The lament of the old diligence poses an image of faded old age that follows upon youthful glory.

It should be pointed out that Vincent admired Daudet's conception of Tartarin and the people of Provence as humorous, kindly and filled with grandiose visions, and Vincent frequently noted how Tartarin captured the spirit of the people of Arles. In letter 530, (1 September, 1888), after reading L'Immortel, a novel by Daudet that focuses on man's futile efforts to achieve in a meaningless world, Vincent complained, that he found the novel, "très beau, mais bien peu consolante," adding that he felt obliged, "de lire un livre sur la chasse à l'éléphant ou un livre absolument menteur d'aventures catégoriquement impossibles...pour faire passé le navrement que l'Immortel va me laisser." He adds further in letter 531, (3 September, 1888), that he prefers the vision of life rendered
in Tartarin, as, "il me semble que l'Immortel n'est pas aussi beau comme couleur que Tartarin, car cela me fait penser avec ces tas d'observations subtiles juste aux désolantes tableaux de Jean Bérand, si secs, si froids. Or Tartarin est si réellement grand..." This statement that describes the Tartarin novels as having a grand and colourful aspect, underlines Vincent's own need and preferences for a vision that provides an alternative to a concept of existence that emphasizes futility and emptiness by means of a detailed analysis and documentation of everyday existence, which is likened here to a careful rendering of local colour. This observation recalls a comment in letter 500,(23 June, 1888), where Vincent argues that local colour and accurate drawing are not able to render reality, and a comment made in letter 470,(18 March, 1888), where Vincent observes that the artist must exaggerate in order to create, "une nature plus belle, plus simple, plus consolante...." Within this context the bright and exaggerated colours in the Tarascon Diligence, F. 478a, may be seen as a counterpart to the fine colour of the exaggerated visions that convey the gay and humorous character of Provence in Daudet's Tartarin novels.

It should also be noted that the reference to the Tarascon diligence may be seen as an allusion to the role played by imagination. In Tartarin de Tarascon, the lament of the diligence is part of Tartarin's dream inspired by the creaks
and groans of the old coach travelling over a bumpy road. The lament also stresses the vision of the old coach imagining her glorious prime of days gone by. Vincent refers to the role of imagination that this canvas implies in letter 571, (17 January, 1889), written from the hospital at Arles, after Gauguin had left the town.

Vincent also alludes to the role imagination plays in this canvas in letter 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888), where the size 30 canvas for the decoration, The Bedroom, F. 482, is described. Vincent explains that the canvas of his bedroom should not only suggest sleep and rest, but looking at this subject, "doit reposer la tête ou plutôt l'imagination". The Bedroom, F. 482, is then posed as a deliberate contrast to the Tarascon Diligence, F. 478a, and the Night Café, F. 463. The Night Café, F. 463, it has been argued above, is a canvas where contrasts of yellow, green, and red are intended to suggest an unrestful and disquieting environment, and as such may be seen as placing a demand on the viewers imagination. It would appear from this reference in letter 554, (16 October, 1888), that Vincent sees The Tarascon Diligence, F. 478a, as exhibiting similar features. While it is possible that this canvas was intended to suggest, like that of the
night café, harshness or a sense of unrest, as a reference to the decrepit and wasted aspects that the old diligence symbolizes, it is more likely, however, the Tarascon Diligence, F. 478a, and the Night Café, F. 463, are paired as both are seen by Vincent as canvases that stimulate the imagination by means of subject matter and exaggerated and suggestive colour, thus posing a contrast to The Bedroom, F. 482, where, "la vue du tableau doit reposer la tête ou plutôt l'imagination." 405

The Autumn Gardens, F. 470, F. 566, or F. 472.

Two canvases described only as, "l'autre jardin", are listed as part of the decoration for the Yellow House in letter 552,(13 October, 1888). There is some difficulty in establishing which canvases Vincent intends to comprise this "autre jardin", as several park garden subjects are painted in September and October, 1888. The first two canvases of the Poet's Garden may be easily identified by descriptions in letters 537,(16 or 17 September, 1888), and 541,(c. 23 and 24 September, 1888). 406 At least four other park garden canvases are described in the letters prior to and including letter 552,(13 October, 1888). In letter 538, (18 September, 1888), Vincent describes his current work on the subject of a walk under plane trees: "Dans ce moment j'ai une autre toile de 30 carrée en train, de nouveau un jardin ou plutôt une promenade sous des platanes, avec du
gazon vert et des buissons noirs de sapin. Hulsker has identified this canvas with The Cedar Walk, F. 470, (plate 11). This canvas comprises a view of a park path that curves from the foreground into the centre of the composition around a central circular area of grass and trees. These trees, a conifer in the centre surrounded by deciduous trees, together with the trees on the far side of the curved path, obscure a view of the sky. Figures of men and women stroll on the path behind the central circle of grass and trees. The colours in this canvas indicate the shade in this area of the park; trees and grass are rendered predominantly in dark greens accented with violet, gold and red. The foreground path is a pale violet highlighted with brushstrokes of gray-green and yellow-green.

In letter 539 (18 September, 1888), Vincent describes how he went out to finish a park garden canvas, and then painted another one as well, which is described as painted without the use of green pigment.  

ce matin de bonne heure je t'ai déjà écrit, puis je suis aller continuer un tableau de jardin ensoleillé. Puis je l'ai rentré - et suis ressorti avec une toile blanche et celle-là aussi est faite."

... Le dernier tableau, fait avec les derniers tubes sur la dernière toile, un jardin naturellement vert, est peint sans vert proprement dit, rien qu'avec du bleu de Prusse et du jaune de chrome.

(539)  

This canvas may be identified with Entrance to the Public Garden, F. 566, (plate 12) according to Hulsker. The composition here comprises a diagonal view of a wide path
that opens from the centre of the composition and recedes into the right middle ground. This path is bordered by fences on either side which enclose the trees and shrubs of the park. Against the fences are benches on which figures of men and women sit. A female figure walks down the path away from the viewer, and a man stands in the middle of the path in the foreground reading a newspaper. The colours in this canvas are based on oranges, yellows, and greens. The central walk is rendered in a predominantly yellow-brown impasto. Orange fences or gates stand on either side of the walk in the foreground. The foliage of the park trees is rendered in olive greens, yellow-greens and browns. The only dark blues, violets or greens of a park canvas such as the The Cedar Walk, F. 470, occur in a tree to the left of the central path that has dark green foliage accented with black, and the branches of a tree to the right of the path, that are rendered in violet.

In letter 549,(9 or 10 October, 1888), Vincent briefly refers to another size 30 garden subject.

\[\begin{align*}
J'\text{ai fait nouvelle toile de 30, et je compte en commencer une nouvelle ce soir lorsqu'on allumera le gaz.} \\
\text{Celle que je viens de faire est encore un jardin.}
\end{align*}\]

(549)

In letter 551,(10 or 11 October, 1888), Vincent describes a size 30 canvas called "Autumn Garden".

\[\begin{align*}
J'\text{ai encore une toile de 30 Jardin d'automne, deux cyprès vert bouteille}
\end{align*}\]
et forme bouteille, trois petits marronniers au feuillage havane et orangé. Un petit if à feuillage de citron pâle au tronc violette, deux petits buissons au feuillage rouge sang et pourpre écarlate.

Un peu de sable, un peu de gazon, un peu de ciel bleu.

(551)

This description appears to correspond to The Public Park, F. 472,410 (plate 13), which presents a view of a straight broad path that cuts diagonally across the canvas from the centre foreground to the right middle ground. A narrow strip of grass and one tree border this path on the right; on the left a broad strip of grass parallels the path. Three deciduous trees stand out here, as do two cone-shaped conifers, identical in size and form, that stand side by side. Beyond this grass area three figures sit on a bench. At the end of the broad path that leads diagonally into the middle ground of the composition is a bench facing out toward the viewer on which a single female figure sits. A colour description of this canvas must rely on Vincent's account in letter 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888), 411 which suggests that like The Entrance to the Public Garden, F. 566, this canvas depicts the park in terms of browns, oranges and greens rather than with the darker blues, violets and dark greens of The Cedar Walk, F. 470.

It seems likely that the canvas described in letter 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888), identified here with The Public Park, F. 472, and that described in letter 549, (9 or 10 October, 1888), are the same canvas. This is suggested as
letter 549, (9 or 10 October, 1888), was only a brief and hurried note to Theo accompanying a letter to Gauguin. Letter 550, (9 or 10 October, 1888), a longer letter to Theo, appears to have been written later the same day, and thus the description of the autumn garden given, in letter 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888), may have been intended to describe more fully a single recent canvas alluded to only briefly in letter 549, (9 or 10 October, 1888). This would accord with the existing number of size 30 canvases of park garden subjects that may be attributed to this period. As a park garden with lovers described in letter 552, (13 October, 1888) may be identified with the third canvas of the Poet's Garden series, the two size 30 canvases that Vincent lists as "l'autre jardin" in letter 552, (13 October, 1888) may be either The Cedar Walk, F. 470, The Entrance to the Public Garden, F. 566, or The Public Garden F. 472. It is not certain which two of these three canvases were intended to comprise "l'autre jardin". Because of this, and as The Public Park, F. 472, has not been studied in colour, and as Vincent's references to each of these subjects do not provide a firm base for an analysis of subject, a discussion of these works is made difficult. Two points however, may be made. First, it is possible that merely painting the rich autumn colour effects of these parks was in itself intended to convey gaiety, happiness, hope, and love. Vincent explains in letter W 7, (9 and 16 September, 1888),
Ma chère soeur je crois actuellement il faut peindre les aspects riches et magnifiques de la nature. Nous avons besoin de gaieté et de bonheur, d'espérance, et d'amour.
Plus je me fais laid, vieux, méchant, malade, pauvre, plus je veux me venger en faisant de la couleur brillante, bien arrangée, resplendissante.

(W 7)

Second, the two canvases intended to comprise "l'autre jardin," take on a significance when juxtaposed with two canvases: The Trinquetaille Bridge, F. 481, and The Railway Bridge, F. 480, which are discussed in the following section.

The Iron Bridge at Trinquetaille, F. 481, and The Railway Bridge, F. 480.

In letter 552, (13 October, 1888), Vincent describes "deux autres toiles de 30, le pont de Trinquetaille, et un autre pont, sur la rue où passé le chemin de fer," that have been painted in the preceding week. The Iron Bridge at Trinquetaille, F. 481, (plate 14), is a view of an overhead iron walkway that adjoins a cement bridge. The walkway and bridge cut across the upper half of the canvas at a slight angle. The view is taken from the roadway below that runs diagonally from the centre foreground of the composition under the archway of the cement bridge in the right middleground. From the side of the road two flights of steps rise to where the bridge and iron walkway meet in the centre of the composition. The cement of the bridge and stairs is a dull gray-blue; the stairs, bridge-contours, and iron girders of the walkway are delineated in blue; the sky behind and
over the scene is an impastoed gray-white. The figures in this composition - a man on the roadway seen through the bridge arch and a woman walking under the bridge, a woman, her back to the viewer halfway way up the wide first flight of stairs, several figures climbing or descending the second flight of stairs or crossing the walkway, - are rendered for the most part in a dark violet-blue. Grass and weeds grow from the cement of the stairs, adding small touches of green and orange to this gray area. A single tree is glimpsed in the distance through the archway of the bridge, and a small shriveled sapling grows at the side of the pavement at the base of the stairs in the centre foreground.

Vincent's description of this canvas is brief but emphasizes the gray colouring and the sickly tree in the foreground.

Enfin le pont de Trinquetaille avec toutes ces marches est une toile faite par une matinée grise, les pierres, l'asphalte, les pavés sont grises, le ciel d'un bleu pâle, des figurines colorées, un malingre arbre à feuillage jaune. (552)

The focus of The Railway Bridge, F. 480 (plate 15), is a road and two laned underpass of a railway bridge and the walkway that leads down to the road level.

A single figure walks on the right lane of the underpass, and on the other side of the cement dividing wall, a horse and cart proceed toward the viewer. A figure of a woman stands at the end of the cement wall that divides the underpass,
and a single figure of a man walks on the access path that leads to the underpass. The pavement and cement in this canvas are rendered in parallel brushstrokes that work a thick impasto; the sky above the bridge and behind the telegraph poles that line it's edge, is rendered in a thick textured impasto. In terms of colour, Vincent's own description must be relied upon. He notes in letter 552, (13 October, 1888), that this canvas, "resemble comme coloration un peu à un Bosboom", and describes both the Iron Bridge at Trinquetaille, F. 481, and the Railway Bridge, F. 480, as "deux toiles dans les tons gris et rompus...."

Because of the lack of references to either the Trinquetaille Bridge, F. 481, or the Railway Bridge, F. 480, or to associated subject matter, it is difficult to establish what colour is to convey in these two compositions. An interpretation, however, may be posed. Although Vincent gives no indication as to why he chose this unusual focus for these two canvases of his decoration, it seems plausible that both The Trinquetaille Bridge, F. 481, and The Railway Bridge, F. 480, are intended to convey a desolate aspect that is not found in the other decoration canvases that render in bright and rich colours the autumn landscape of Arles. The isolated figures in the two bridge canvas surrounded by cement and pavement, contrast with those depicted at work in The Furrows, F. 574, or The Vineyard, F. 475, the
lovers in *The Starry Night*, F. 474, and *The Poet's Garden*, F. 479, and F. 485, and those that stroll through or relax in the Poet's Garden represented by F. 1465, or the *Autumn Gardens*, F. 470, F. 566, or F. 472. As such *The Trinquetaille Bridge*, F. 480, and *The Railway Bridge*, F. 481, may be intended to suggest the isolation and desolation of the developing town, in much the same way that the *Night Café*, F. 463, poses an image of the harsh disturbing atmosphere of the all night restaurant. These images are made more powerful because of Vincent's usual focus on the rich colours of the Arles landscape. As a pair *The Trinquetaille Bridge*, F. 481, and *The Railway Bridge*, F. 480, especially stand in contrast to the two park canvases described in letter 552, (13 October, 1888), as "*l'autre jardin*". While it has not been established which two of three park gardens — *The Cedar Walk*, F. 470, *The Entrance to the Public Garden*, F. 566, *The Public Garden*, F. 472 — are intended by the reference to "*l'autre jardin*", it should be noted that both *The Trinquetaille Bridge*, F. 481, and *The Railway Bridge* F. 480, are rendered in gray colours, and are described in letter 552, (13 October, 1888): as, "deux toiles dans les tons gris et rompus...." This suggests a comparison with the two park gardens, *The Entrance to the Public Garden*, F. 566, and *The Public Garden*, F. 472, canvases that are...
rendered with emphasis given to oranges, yellows and browns, providing a subtle complementary contrast to The Trinquetaille Bridge, F. 481, at least, and possibly The Railway Bridge, F. 480 as well. While this juxtaposition may not have been part of Vincent's plan, all three park gardens that present themselves as, "l'autre jardin", depict figures relaxing and strolling amid the park trees and grass, and when juxtaposed with The Trinquetaille Bridge, F. 481, and The Railway Bridge, F. 480 assert the desolate aspect of the two bridge canvases with their unrelaxed figures walking through the environment of cement, iron and pavement.

The Poet's Garden, F. 479, and F. 485.

The two canvases of the Poet's Garden decoration for Gauguin's room, that replace the initial plan of a decoration of sunflower canvases, have been discussed above. In letter 552, (13 October, 1888), Vincent refers to three canvases entitled The Poet's Garden. This third canvas may be identified with the canvas, F. 479, (plate 16), a park garden with two lovers, that is described in letter 552, (13 October, 1888).

Suppose maintenant un sapin bleu vert immense, étendant des branches horizontales sur une pelouse très vert et du sable tacheté de lumière et d'ombre.

Deux figures d'amoureux se trouvent à l'ombre du grand arbre; toile de 30."

Ce coin de jardin fort simple est égayé par des parterres de géraniums mine orangé dans les fonds, sous les branches. (552)
The Poet's Garden, F. 479, depicts a couple walking on a park path in the shade of a large conifer. The composition is divided diagonally by the broad yellow gray path which comprises the lower left portion of the canvas. In the upper right portion is the base of a large blue green and violet tree, the branches of which extend over the path. The tree stands in an area of yellow-green grass. The tree shades a portion of the grass and this shaded area is rendered in blue-violet. The cast shadow on the path is rendered with broad brushstrokes of green gray layed over the yellow-gray impasto. The pair of lovers are set in the middle ground on the path, and stroll toward the viewer. The man wears a dark blue shirt, pale green trousers, and bright orange hat; the woman wears a blue dress and carries an orange bag. At the end of the path, behind the tree, and the lovers are flower gardens, lit by sunlight and rendered in pale yellows and greens.

In letter 556, (21 or 22 October, 1888), just prior to Gauguin's arrival on October 23 or 24, 1888, a third canvas for the Poet's Garden decoration is described.

"Voici croquis bien vague de ma dernière toile, une rangée de cyprès verts contre un ciel rose avec un croissant citron pâle. Avant-plan de terrain vague et du sable et quelques chardons. Deux amoureux l'homme bleu pâle à chapeau jaune, la femme a un corsage rose, et un jupe noire. Cela fait la quatrième toile du "jardin du poète" qui est la décoration de la chambre à Gauguin." (556)
This canvas, *The Poet's Garden* F. 485 (plate 17), has been lost for four decades, and any analysis must rely on the black and white reproduction in the de la Faille catalogue and on Vincent's description quoted in the passage above. In *The Poet's Garden*, F. 485, a man dressed in a pale blue suit, with a yellow hat and a woman in pink blouse and black shirt occupy the centre foreground of the composition, and walk along a wide path that cuts diagonally across the canvas from mid right to lower left. A row of cypress trees, described as green, border this path, and behind is a sky with a crescent moon. Vincent describes this sky as pink, suggesting an early evening setting for this scene. The black and white de la Faille reproduction reveals the thick impasto that gives a horizontal wave-like texture to the sky, and which is used to render the sandy path, trees and the figures of the lovers.

The colours that depict the two pairs of lovers and their surroundings in *The Poet's Garden*, F. 479, and the *Poet's Garden*, F. 485, suggest that Vincent's concern with what is described in letter 555, (17 October, 1888) as "le désir d'exprimer quelque chose par la couleur même", is at work in these two canvases. In the *Poet's Garden* F. 479, blue is used to render both the figure of the man and woman, and is accented by the orange of the man's hat and the woman's bag. This use of colour recalls Vincent's explanation in letter 531, (3 September, 1888), that he sought to express
through colour, "l'amour de deux amoureux par un mariage de deux complémentaires, leur mélange et leurs oppositions, les vibrations mystérieuses." Given Vincent's concern with expressing the relationship of two lovers by means of a complementary pair, the blue and orange used to render the man and woman in this third canvas for the Poet's Garden series may be intended to be in itself expressive. At the same time, these colours correspond to and echo the blue-violet of the pine tree and its shadow that envelops this pair. In the fourth Poet's Garden, F. 485, (a colour analysis of which must rely on the description of this canvas in letter 556,(21 or 22 October, 1888)425, the man is described as dressed in blue and yellow, and the woman as dressed in a pink blouse and black skirt. The pale blue, yellow, and pink emphasis here, based on the three primary colours, may be seen as intended to suggest an interdependant unified whole. Another interpretation of this colour relationship may be posed. While Vincent describes the woman's skirt as black, it is interesting to speculate whether this black would have been in fact tinged with green, thereby rendering each of the figures in terms of a complementary pair.

The first two canvases of the Poet's Garden, F. 468, and that represented by F. 1465, were intended to evoke a vision of Renaissance poets who thrived in the south, and so inspire Gauguin with a vision of his own role as the
"nouveau poète d'ici", involved in a similar renaissance of art. The focus on lovers in a garden in the third and fourth canvases of the Poet's Garden, F. 479, and F. 485, may also be seen to relate to this theme of artistic rebirth. In letter 555, (17 October, 1888), Vincent refers again to his belief in the emergence of a new school of colorists in the south.

Q'une nouvelle école coloriste prendra racine dans le midi, j'y crois, voyant de plus en plus que ceux du nord se fondent plutôt sur l'habileté de la brosse, et l'effet dit pittoresque, que sur le désir d'exprimer quelque chose par la couleur même.

(555)

This vision has been referred to several times in the preceding discussion of Vincent's concept of the Yellow House, which Vincent sees, in part, as an effort to continue the work of previous colourists. While Vincent frequently refers to Delacroix as a precursor in the realm of suggestive colour, he sees his efforts to establish a studio in the south of France as a continuation of the work of Monticelli who painted the south in terms of colour, but who died a victim of poverty and isolation. As has already been pointed out, Vincent related his own technique of a thick impasto that is evidenced in the canvases for the decoration of the Yellow House, with that of Monticelli. In letter 541, (c. 23 and 24 September, 1888), in discussing this technique, Vincent adds that as yet he has, not attempted to portray figures of lovers that were often Monticelli's subject.
Vincent, then, associates figures of lovers with Monticelli's art. The pair of lovers, depicted in *The Starry Sky* F. 474, and in the third and fourth *Poet's Garden*, F. 479, and F. 485, may have been intended to allude to this motif in Monticelli's work and so, like Vincent's use of a thick impasto, point to the continuation of that artist's work in the south. The lovers that are the focus of *The Poet's Garden*, F. 479, and F. 485, within this context, may be seen as an overt reference to Vincent's determination to carry on Monticelli's work. In letter W 8, (c. 26 August, 1888), he had described to Wil how once Gauguin joined him in Arles, he would dress up in Monticelli's clothes and saunter through Marseilles to show that Monticelli had not died. Vincent's concern with continuing Monticelli's work however must be seen in relation to his vision of artistic continuation, and his sense that his own function is to forge a link in a chain of artistic legacy. As such the references to Monticelli in terms of colour, technique, and possibly through the motif of pairs of lovers, relate to the larger concept of an artistic association that would guarantee artistic and material...
survival to present and future generations. Given this significance, the pair of lovers as part of the decoration for Gauguin's room, clearly continues the theme of the first two Poet's Garden canvases, F. 468, and that represented by F. 1465.

The third and fourth canvas of the Poet's Garden, F. 479, and F. 485, link themselves with the first two canvases of the series, F. 468, and that represented by F. 1465, in a second way. The first two canvases of the Poet's Garden were intended to evoke an image of the Renaissance poets: Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. The pair of lovers in the third and fourth canvases of the Poet's Garden suggest the theme of love that was the subject matter of these three poets. Vincent himself associated Boccaccio with the depiction of lovers and indeed at one point likens Monticelli to Boccaccio because of this similarity, and because both led lives characterized by loneliness and melancholy. In letter 626a, (10 or 11 February, 1890), written to the young art critic Albert Aurier to thank him for a recent article that appeared in the Mercure de France, Vincent indicates Monticelli's influence on his own art, and likens the artist's character to that of Boccaccio.

"Voici, à ce que je sache, il n'y a pas de coloriste venant aussi droit et directement de Delacroix; est pourtant est-il probable, à mon avis que Monticelli ne tenait que de seconde main les théories de la couleur de Delacroix

... Son tempérament d'artiste à lui Monticelli cela me semble être justa celui de l'auteur du Décaméron - Boccace - un mélancolique, un malheureux assez résigné, voyant passer la
The image of these two artists as depicting lovers and yet themselves passed by love and life\textsuperscript{436} recalls Vincent's image of both Gauguin and himself as isolated from real life.\textsuperscript{437} Indeed part of Vincent's prescription for Gauguin's melancholy that he reads into the \textit{Self Portrait; Les Misérables} is that Gauguin should go for walks in pleasant surroundings and indulge in amoureuse adventures.\textsuperscript{438} The \textit{Poet's Garden} canvases F. 479, and F. 485, which feature lovers strolling through a park setting may be seen to allude to a motif that Vincent associates with Monticelli, the artist whose work he intends to carry on in the south by means of the Yellow House. At the same time Vincent sees both Monticelli and Boccaccio, one of the poets that the first two \textit{Poet's Garden} canvases is to evoke, as artists who depicted lovers, and yet were themselves passed by love. The third and fourth canvas of the \textit{Poet's Garden} scenes, then, may be seen as presenting an image that likens Gauguin to previous artists of the south, implying a promise of greatness and reknown. Like the \textit{Poets Garden}, F. 468, and F. 1465 rebirth and renaissance are also suggested to counteract Gauguin's melancholy concept of impressionism. The final two canvases of the \textit{Poet's Garden}, F. 479 and F. 485 also pose a positive vision; the
lovers promise a more consoling future than the isolation that has characterized artistic life in the past. Significantly their rendition in terms of suggestive colour relationships asserts the ability to convey "la poésie rien qu'en bien arrangeant des couleurs." The final two canvases for the Poet's Garden series, by this means, allude to the future art of colour and the renaissance to which the Yellow House and the association with Gauguin is dedicated.

The Bedroom, F. 482.

In letter 554, (16 October, 1888), the size 30 canvas, The Bedroom, F. 482, (plate 18), is first announced. The subject of this canvas is the interior of Vincent's bedroom in the Yellow House. The room is viewed from one end. On the right wall, in the immediate foreground, is the edge of a blue door; on the far side of this door a yellow-orange wood bed with pale green-white sheets and pillows, and a bright red blanket, is pressed against the wall. Four pictures hang on this wall above the bed. On the wall at the far end of the room, a small landscape hangs over the head of Vincent's bed beside a green shuttered window. A small brown table stands in the left corner beside a yellow straw bottomed chair that faces the head of the bed. On the table are a blue jug and wash basin, and a small black framed mirror hangs directly above. On the left wall is another blue door; a second yellow straw bottomed chair, it's
back against the wall faces into the room. The walls in
the room are pale lilac and the floor is rendered in a brick
colour. In describing The Bedroom, F. 482, to Theo in letter
554, (16 October, 1888), Vincent explains that this new canvas
is to express rest and quiet.

"Enfin je t'envoie un petit croquis pour
to donner au moins une idée de la tournure
que prend le travail.... J'ai encore les yeux
fatigués, mais enfin j'avais une nouvelle
idée en tête et en voici le croquis, toujours
toile de 30.
C'est cette fois-ci ma chambre à coucher
tout simplement, seulement la couleur doit
ici faire la chose et en donnant par sa sim­
plification un style plus grand aux choses,
etre suggestive ici du repos on du sommeil
en général. Enfin la vue du tableau doit
poser la tête où plutôt l'imagination.
Les murs sont d'un violet pâle. Le sol est
to carreaux rouges.
Le bois du lit et les chaises sont jaune
beurre frais, le drap et les oreillers citron
vert très clair.
La couverture rouge écarlate. La fenêtre
verte.
La table à toilette orangée, la curvette
bleue.
Les portes lilas.
Et c'est tout-rien dans cette chambre à
violet clos.
La carrure des meubles doit maintenant encore
exprimer le repos inébranlable.... Le cadre
- comme il n'y a pas de blanc dans le tableau -
sera blanc.
Cela pour prendre ma revanche du repos force
que j'ai été obligé de prendre.

(554)

In letter B 22, (17 October, 1888) to Gauguin, Vincent also
emphasizes the aspect of rest that this canvas is to convey.

J'ai fait toujours pour ma décoration, une
toile de trente de ma chambre à coucher avec
les meubles en bois blanc.... cela m'a énorme­
ment amusé de faire cet intérieur sans rien....
to tientes plates, mais grossièrement brossées,
en pleine pâte, les murs lilas pâle, le sol
d'un rouge rompu et fané, les chaises et le
Vincent's effort to create an atmosphere of rest in the Yellow House has been pointed out already. In letter 534, (9 September, 1888), Vincent explained that he had bought wooden country beds in order to give the appearance of solidity, durability and quiet. This aspect of the furniture for the Yellow House is referred to again in letter 554, (16 October, 1888), when Vincent explains of his canvas *The Bedroom* F. 482, "la carrure des meubles doit maintenant encore exprimer le repos inébranlable". In both descriptions of *The Bedroom*, F. 482, to Theo in letter 554, (16 October, 1888) and to Gauguin in letter B 22, (17 October, 1888), however, Vincent emphasizes that it is colour that is to convey this sense of quiet and rest.

"...la couleur doit ici faire la chose et en donnant par sa simplification un style plus grand aux choses, être suggestive ici du repos ou du sommeil en général."

"J'aurais voulu exprimer un repos absolument par tous ces tons très divers...."

In order to understand how Vincent intends his colour in this canvas to suggest absolute rest, the careful description
of colour he gives to both Theo and Gauguin must be examined again. Vincent lists the colours of objects in the room in such a way that they may be grouped into complementary pairs. The pale violet walls and brick red floor are followed by a description of the yellow chairs and bed, and the pale citron sheets and pillows; the bright red blanket pairs itself with the green window; the orange dressing table pairs itself with the blue jug and basin. That Vincent intended his description to suggest a grouping in terms of these three complementary pairs is affirmed in letter B 22,(17 October, 1888), to Gauguin. After describing the colours in The Bedroom, F. 482 Vincent explains that there is a small touch of white added to the black framed mirror, so that a fourth pair of complementaries is presented in the composition.

J'aurais voulu exprimer un répos absolu par tous ces tons très divers, vous voyez, et on il n'y a de blanc que la petite note que donne le miroir à cadre noir (ou fourrer encore la quatrième paire de complémentaires là-dedans).

(B 22)

While Vincent considered black and white as neutral colours produced by the combinations of the three primary hues, he also considered black and white as a complementary pair. The addition of this fourth complementary pair to the colour arrangement of The Bedroom, F. 482, is important to the way in which Vincent sees colour as assuming an expressive role in this canvas. As has been pointed out already in this thesis, a balance, or lack of balance between complementary
pairs is important to Vincent's concept of suggestive colour. In *The Sower*, F. 422, the interaction between the two complementaries yellow and violet is important to meaning of the canvas.\(^{443}\) In *The Night Café*, F. 463, the lack of balance and harmony of colours is intended to impart the disturbing and unrestful character to the scene.\(^{444}\) The canvas *The Bedroom*, F. 482, deliberately presents what are to Vincent the four basic complementary pairs based on the six primary and secondary colours, plus black and white. The occurrence of all the elemental colours creates a colour structure that is complete\(^{445}\), suggesting perfect balance and wholeness. This colour structure, interpreted in this way accounts for the repose and rest that Vincent indicates to Theo in letter 554, (16 October, 1888), and to Gauguin in letter B22, (17 October, 1888), that *The Bedroom*, F. 482, is to suggest by means of colour. Vincent also explains to Theo in letter 554, (16 October, 1888), that looking at *The Bedroom*, F. 482, "doit reposer la tête ou plutôt l'imagination." As has been pointed out already in the analysis of the decoration canvases, Vincent manipulates various colour combinations, especially complementary colours, to convey concepts and emotions.\(^{446}\) By the inclusion of all four complementary pairs in *The Bedroom*, F. 482, Vincent appears to have deliberately attempted to present the viewer with a complete and whole colour structure that would not demand any emotional or imaginative response, and in this way provide rest for,"la tête
ou plutôt l'imagina...®

While Vincent wished his Yellow House to emanate an atmosphere of peace and tranquility,® the need for the absolute rest that Vincent finds so necessary to express by means of colour, in The Bedroom, F. 482, in a large part stems from Vincent's previous weeks work. In letter 552, (13 October, 1888), it is explained that four canvases (The Tarascon Dilligence, F. 478a, The Poet's Garden, F. 479, The Iron Bridge at Trinquetaille, F. 481, and The Railway Bridge, F. 480), have been painted over a one week period. This effort was clearly exhausting for Vincent. He explains in letter 553, (13 October, 1888), that he is extremely tired from the preceding weeks work and has slept sixteen hours straight.

J'ai été et suis encore presqu'assomme par le travail de la semaine passé. Je ne peux encore rien faire, mais d'ailleurs il fait un mistral de très grande violence.... Je suis donc bien obligé de rester tranquille. Je viens de dormir sieze heures d'un trait.... Mais j'ai fait une bonne semaine, allez de cinq toiles. Si cela se venge un peu sur celle-ci, eh, bien, c'est naturel.®

(553)

In letter 554, (16 October, 1888), The Bedroom is described as painted in revenge for this enforced rest.

Cela pour prendre ma revanche du repos force que j'ai été obligé de prendre.®

(554)

Similarly, in letter B 22, (c. 18 September, 1888), that describes The Bedroom, F. 482, to Gauguin, Vincent also refers
to the spell of exhaustion that forced him to rest for two
and a half days prior to the painting of the canvas of his
bedroom.

'Dites donc, je vous écrivais l'autre jour
que j'avais la vue étrangement fatiguée. Bon,
je me suis répouse deux jours et demi, et puis
je me suis remis au travail mais n'osant pas
encore aller en pleine air.. J'ai fait, toujours
pour ma décoration, une toile de trente de ma
chambre à coucher....

(B22)

That painting, which entailed for Vincent the balancing of
the six primary and secondary colours, was exhausting work
had been explained to Theo in letter 507, (c. 7 July, 1888).

... souvent je pense à cet excellent peintre
Monticelli ... lorsque je me vois revenir
moi-même d'un travail mental pour équilibrer
les 6 couleurs essentielles, rouges-blue,
jaune-orange-lilas-vert.
Travail et calcul sec et où l'on a l'esprit
tendu extrêmement, comme un acteur sur la
scène dans un rôle difficile....

(507)

The Bedroom, F. 482, then, featuring what are to Vincent
the four basic complementary colour pairs suggestive of completeness
balance, and hence, repose, refers to the artist's own need
for rest after the demanding work of the preceeding week.
The complementary pairs used in this canvas in this way,
fulfill and clarify Vincent's explanation in letter 554, (16
October, 1888), that in The Bedroom, F. 482, "la couleur
doit ici faire la chose.... suggestive ici du répos ou du
sommeil en général", and in B 22, (17 October, 1888): "J'au-
rais voulu exprimer un répos absolu par tous ces tons très
divers..." The suggestive power given to colour relationships is thus underlined and Vincents efforts to effect a new art based on colour are reasserted.
CONCLUSION

With the exception of the two sunflower canvases F. 454, and F. 456, and possibly the Poet's Garden series, F. 468, F. 485, F. 1465, and F. 479, the decoration canvases for the Yellow House do not appear to emerge according to an overall preconceived plan, but in response to Vincent's day by day contact with subjects that attract him. Nevertheless, as the preceding analysis of the individual size 30 canvases for the decoration shows, interdependant themes recur in each of the decoration canvases and together with Vincent's concern with colour and technique serve to bind the series together as a whole.

In terms of theme, the Yellow House as a studio in the south, is to provide a home and stable working environment for both Vincent and Gauguin, and is intended to offer refuge and support for other artists in times of need. This project has a further significance as Vincent sees this studio as lasting beyond his own life, providing a stable working environment for artists of the future. Vincent's sense that each generation carries on the work of previous generations is important to the establishment of the studio, for the continuity of human effort answers both Vincent's personal need for meaning in his own life and work, and for a comp-
rehensible concept of life after death and the infinite. The studio, as Vincent remarks several times, offers him tranquility and consolation as the creation of something that will last beyond his own life gives meaning to the future and infinite. This concern overlaps Vincent's concept of artistic continuation. Vincent sees himself as a link in a long chain of artists working with colour. More specifically, he sees the studio, and his own art as carrying on the work of Monticelli, who lived in Marseilles, close to Arles, and who rendered the south in terms of colour. By providing a stable working environment the studio is to prevent present and future generations of artists from suffering the hardships that surrounded Monticelli at his death. At the same time these artists will paint the south in colour, thereby continuing Monticelli's work. Vincent's vision of Gauguin's greatness, which he sees as hindered by poverty, illness, and living in cafes and hotels, makes Monticelli a particularly relevant symbol for the Yellow House.

The decoration as a whole in terms of it's focus on autumnal subject matter implies the promise of regeneration and thus presents a consoling vision that corresponds to Vincent's concept of the Yellow House with it's promise of peace, tranquility and a regeneration in art that will effect a future art of colour. The individual canvases for the decoration allude more specifically to various aspects
involved in Vincent's vision of his studio. At least one of the sunflower canvases F. 454, is intended as a hommage to Monticelli. The yellows and oranges in this canvas are, according to Vincent, the colours used by Monticelli to render the sun, love, and gaiety, that Monticelli associated with the south. The Night Café, F. 463, which depicts the lonely disquieting environment that Vincent sees himself and Gauguin as forced to suffer, summarizes the aspects of artistic life that the Yellow House is to dispell. This canvas stands in marked contrast to another canvas for the decoration, The House, F. 464, that depicts the peace and stability of the Yellow House and its locale, which are the benefits the studio is to provide both artists. The canvases for the Poet's Garden—F. 468, that represented by F. 1465, F. 479, and F. 485—intended to decorate Gauguin's room and apparently inspired by Gauguin's pessimistic Self Portrait: Les Misérables, promise Gauguin a nourishing and productive existence in Arles, and refer by title and the allusion to Renaissance poets, to a coming renaissance in contemporary art, and to Gauguin's major role in this development. Canvases such as The Starry Night, F. 474, and The Furrows, F. 574, pose an image of love, work, and the continuation of man's work by succeeding generations in the future. As such they reflect Vincent's need to establish a consoling and tranquilizing vision of life and in this way parallel Vincent's concept of artistic continuation which similarly provides
While these canvases do not allude directly to Monticelli, or to a promise of a future renaissance in art, in terms of subject and in terms of the quietude and harmony that the technique in each is described as rendering, these works correspond to and amplify, the concerns of other canvases within the series.

The decoration must be understood as a major effort on Vincent's part to express his hope that the studio in the south with its atmosphere of tranquility and peace, would enable artists to work towards a renaissance. The prospect of Gauguin's arrival in Arles is a major impetus to the decoration project. Vincent, who considered Gauguin a great artist, wished to heop and inspire Gauguin with the Yellow House and it's decorations that alluded to a productive and promising present and future. That Vincent also wished to impress Gauguin with his work on the decoration, as he indicates in letter 541, (c. 29 September 1888), no doubt accounts for his disappointment when he writes to Theo in letter 558, (28 October, 1888) following Gauguin's arrival in Arles and reports that Gauguin has made no comment as yet on the decoration series. Indeed the Gauguin/Vincent association did not work out. Gauguin had little respect for Vincent's concepts on art, or his painting technique, and by the end of December, their relationship had culminated in Vincent slicing his own ear and Gauguin departing
hurriedly for Paris, a crisis that effectively curtailed the prospects of the studio in the south. As a postscript to the decoration, it should be added that Vincent spent the first months of 1889 recuperating in the hospital at Arles attempting to regain his mental stability following the breakup with Gauguin. In his absence from the Yellow House, the walls and the decoration canvases deteriorated because of dampness. To Vincent this destroyed the vision of a durable studio in the south, already damaged by the dissolution of the partnership with Gauguin. In letter 588 (30 April, 1889) Vincent describes the damage to the house and to the decoration canvases adding,

Cela me faisait de l'effet, non seulement l'atelier sombre, mais même les études qui en auraient été le souvenir, abimées, c'est se definitif et mon élan pour fonder quelque chose de très simple mais de durable, était si voulu.

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Colour, and the technique that renders colour play a major role in the decoration canvases and represent a major achievement in Vincent's art. Studied individually, several of the canvases reveal Vincent's use of complementary colour relationships to convey aspects of subject. Not all the decoration canvases have been analyzed according to the principles of suggestive colour specifically described by Vincent as at work in The Sower, F. 422, Portrait of Patience Escalier, F. 443, The Night Cafe, F. 463, and
The Bedroom, F. 482 - a difficulty that may arise as what were for Vincent obvious colour relationships in a canvas, (such as the occurrence of four complementary pairs in The Bedroom, F. 482), are not always so easily apparent to the viewer. Nevertheless the concern with colour relationships that are able to convey "idées poétiques", and which are also likened to the evocative power of music, underlines Vincent's efforts to develop an expressive art.

As a rejection of impressionist and neoimpressionist vision, the emergence of a concern with suggestive colour is paralleled by a new technique. At the outset of the decoration, Vincent announces a simple technique of a thick impasto that avoids the detailed brushwork associated with impressionism and neoimpressionism. This technique is evident in all the size 30 canvases for the Yellow House and serves to separate them stylistically both from Vincent's previous work at Arles, and from work executed during and after Gauguin's stay in Arles. While the use of a thick impasto must derive in part from Vincent's efforts over the spring and summer of 1888 to simplify and exaggerate his colour effects, a goal which contradicts the aims of a detailed brushwork, a possible relationship exists between the concern with suggestive and expressive colour, and this new technique. In letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888) in which the simple new technique is announced Vincent explains: "je voudrais
piendre de façon qu'a la rigueur tout le monde qui a des yeux, puisse y voir clair."
Simplified colour areas do allow colour juxtapositions to be more easily observed as
in the case of The Sunflowers, F. 454, and F. 456, or The Night Cafe, F. 463. The thick impasto in the majority of
the decoration canvases, however, works several colours together in single strokes, and frequently, even these brushstrokes are overlayed with dots or dashes of pigment of another colour. The use of a thick impasto to render the
decoration canvases also appears to derive from Vincent's admiration of Monticelli. As the studio in the south and several of the canvases of the decoration appear to refer to the continuation of Monticelli's work, it is possible that Vincent may have intended to stress this link through his use of a Monticelli-like technique. At the same time the expressive aspects of the textured canvas surface in
two canvases for the decoration The Furrows, F. 574, and The Starry Night, F. 474, was also recognized by Vincent
as in letter 543, (c. 28 September 1888), Vincent indicates that he intends his technique to become more harmonious like a peace of music played with emotion,\(^{459}\) that expressive colour is also likened to music, reasserts the interdependence between the two.

The concern with suggestive colour based on specific colour relationships has other implications for Vincent's art.
This concern appears to continue past Vincent's work on the decoration. In letter W. 9, (c. 2 December, 1888), the ability of colour arrangements (a complementary colour pair are specifically described), to convey poetry and music is explained to Wil. In the spring of 1889 in letter 590, (3 May, 1889), Vincent writes to Theo that he has not regreted his study of colour; in a postscript, he adds that he is still concerned with colour concepts formed in Nuenen.

Anne Stiles Wylie has pointed out the role of line in structuring Vincent's compositions, and has argued that linear structure and Vincent's perspectival system provided an anchor for Vincent's rendition of reality allowing him to systematize, frame, and therefore cope with his world. Colour, it is suggested here, works also in a similar way. Vincent's expressive use of colour is based on rules that govern particular colour relationships. While Vincent's need for rules is especially evident in times of mental breakdown, as is explained to Theo in letter 589 (2 May, 1888), Vincent also indicates that his need for rules and structure is always an aspect of his life and provides a measure of tranquility in his confrontation with reality.

Je suis "mal pris" dans la vie et mon état mental est non seulement mais a été aussi abstrait, de façon que quoi qu'on ferait pour moi, je ne peux pas réfléchir à équilibrer ma vie. Là où je dois suivre
The Portrait with Bandaged Ear, F. 529, with complementary pairs carefully balanced reveals the use of colour structure to suggest such tranquility after a mental crisis, and to structure reality in a way in keeping with Vincent's own needs. While the suggestion arises that Vincent's need for a consoling and tranquilizing vision of reality made several times during the period in which the decoration is painted, is answered in part by a similar recourse to rules that for Vincent govern colour expression, there is also the implication that similar principles, affecting both colour-structure and meaning, are at work in canvases painted following the fall of 1888.
FOOTNOTES

1 While The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh, 3 vols., Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1959, provides and English translation of Vincent's letters, this translation often alters the original connotations and implications of words, expressions and phrases. For this reason the following system for citing and quoting Vincent's letters has been used in this thesis. Letter numbers refer to Verzamelde Brieven van Vincent van Gogh, ed. by J. van Gogh Bonger (1914), revised and augmented by Dr. V.W. van Gogh (1953), 2 vols., Amsterdam-Antwerp: Wereld-Bibliotheek, 1974. This edition presents the letters in the language in which they were originally written i.e. principally in Dutch up to Vincent's arrival in Paris in March 1886, and principally in French following that date. (Vincent continues to write in Dutch to his sister Wil from letter W1, (summer or fall, 1887), through to W7, (c. 21 August, 1888). Several letters from 1886 on, are written in English). As the major portion of this thesis relies upon letters written after 1886, these letters are quoted in Vincent's original French as presented in Verzamelde Brieven. The few letters originally written in English are also quoted in their original language from this text. In the case of Vincent's letters written in Dutch, I have had to rely on the English translation in the Complete Letters, because of my own unfamiliarity with the Dutch language. This has been done in the recognition that, consultation of these letters in the original Dutch might in several cases modify the emphasis or meaning of passages quoted in this thesis. The reader is referred to Verzamelde Brieven, for the original Dutch. A footnote reference will identify the few letters originally written in English to distinguish them from the English translation of the Dutch letters. Bracketed dates following the letters are derived from Jan Hulsker's dating of the letters in the Register pp. 217-18 of Van Gogh door Van Gogh. De brieven als commentaar op zijn werk, Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International, 1973, which summarizes in tabular form, Hulsker's dating of all the letters. These dates have been accepted for the purposes of this thesis, although not all his datings should be accepted as final (see for example Mark Roskill's comment on Hulsker's chronology of the letters in, Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Impressionist Circle, Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1970, p. 285). Information in Hulsker's, "Summaries" and "Commentaries" to the letters in Van Gogh door Van Gogh, has been provided to me by Prof. George Rosenberg.

2 The Vincent van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam possesses several letters written by Gauguin to both Theo and Vincent from 1888 until 1890. These letters are listed by number, preceded by the letter G, and followed by a probable date of writing, in the catalogue "Lettres de Paul Gauguin (non publiees)" in Institut Neerlandais, Oeuvres écrites de Gauguin et Van Gogh, Collections du Musée National Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam, 14 May-29 June, 1975, pp. 21-30. In this thesis
numbers preceded by the letter G will refer to the letters from Gauguin, to Theo and Vincent that are summarized in this catalogue. It should be pointed out that any quotations from these letters are based on the letter reproductions in the collection of the Vincent van Gogh Museum as the catalogue, "Lettres de Paul Gauguin (non publiees)", provides only brief excerpts from Gauguin's correspondence. It is likely that letter G6, (August, 1888), is the letter from Gauguin that Vincent refers to in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), as in letter G6, Gauguin refers to "mon voyage a Provence", and closes his letter by expressing his interest in seeing Vincent's house in Arles. These comments could account for Vincent's conclusion in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), that Gauguin, "se dit toujours pret a venir dans le Midi que le chance le permettra''.

3 In letter G3, (22 May, 1888), to Theo, Gauguin describes how he has been living on credit for three months.

4 For a study of the financial help that was provided Vincent by Theo, see Jan Hulscker, "Van Gogh's Exotic Years in Arles", Vincent, I, 4, (summer, 1972), pp. 2-16, and Jan Hulscker, Van Gogh door Van Gogh, "Commentary" to letter 464, (c. 25 February, 1888), p. 119.

5 The term Yellow House will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the four room house that Vincent rented in Arles in May, 1888; 'See letter 480, (1 May, 1888)'. It should be pointed out that Vincent does not refer to the house by this term through the spring, summer or fall of 1888. It is not until early 1889, while recovering from his mental crisis that broke up the union with Gauguin, that Vincent refers in letter 566, (4 January, 1889), in a postscript to Gauguin, to "notre pauvre petite maison jaune", and in letter 571, (17 January, 1889), to "ma petite maison jaune".

6 In letter 480, (1 May, 1888), Vincent refers to a roll of drawings sent to Theo which contains "...un croquis hatif sur papier jaune, une pelousse dans le square qui se trouve a l'entrée de la ville, et au fond une bâtisse, à peu pres comme ceci. Eh bien, j'ai aujourd'hui loué l'aile droite de cette construction, qui contient quatre pièces ou plutot deux avec deux cabinets. C'est peint en jaune dehors, blanche à la chaux à l'intérieur, en plein soleil.... Maintenant mon désir serait de meubler une pièce, celle du premier étage, pour pouvoir y coucher. Cela restera l'atelier, le magasin pour tout le temps de la campagne ici dans le midi...."

7 Vincent seems to have suffered somewhat over the summer of 1888 from the lack of a definite response from Gauguin to the plan that they both join forces in Arles. For example in letters 521,
(12 August, 1888), and 524, (14 or 15 August, 1888), Vincent suggests to Theo that he should perhaps join Gauguin in Pont Aven, if Gauguin is unwilling or unable to come south to Arles. In letter 524, (14 or 15 August, 1888), Vincent again expresses some concern over this situation. He observes that a letter from Bernard has informed him that Bernard and Gauguin had joined forces at Pont Aven; Vincent adds worriedly that there is no mention of any plan whereby Gauguin would come south to Arles, or Vincent would go north to Pont Aven.

8 In letter B15, (c. 18 August, 1888), Vincent had related to Bernard that he planned a decoration of six sunflower canvases for his studio. "J'y songe de décorer mon atelier d'une demidouzaine de tableau de tournesols...." This comment suggests that while Vincent is considering such a plan, he has not yet begun any canvases for the decoration. Hulsker's, Van Gogh door Van Gogh, "Commentary" to letter B15, (c. 18 August, 1888), p. 148, and "Commentary" to letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), p. 149, supports this interpretation. In a letter written to Wil, W6, (c. 21 August, 1888), Vincent notes that he intends to decorate the studio, "with nothing but sunflowers."

9 The catalogue numbers given to Vincent's paintings and drawings refer to J.B. de la Faille, The Complete Works of Vincent Van Gogh. His Paintings and Drawings, Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International, 1970. With the exception of the seventeen canvases for the decoration of the Yellow House, the titles of works in this catalogue (although frequently at variance with Vincent's own descriptions of his work), have been used in this thesis; in a few cases excessively long titles have been shortened to a more convenient form. The titles that will be used for the seventeen size 30 canvases for the decoration of the Yellow House are indicated, pp. 5-6 of the Introduction. These titles are used as they accord with Vincent's own references to these canvases during the period in which he was concerned with the decoration series. Where letter references in the text of this thesis do not date canvases referred to, then bracketed dates will follow the title, based on the de la Faille dating of Vincent's works.

10 The following canvas sizes and their dimensions are taken from John Rewald, Lettres à son fils Lucien, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1950, p. 25. Size 5 = 35 x 27 cm., size 6 = 41 x 33 cm., size 8 = 46 x 38 cm., size 10 = 55 x 46 cm., size 15 = 65 x 54 cm., size 20 = 73 x 60 cm., size 25 = 81 x 65 cm., size 30 = 92 x 73 cm.

11 The editors of de la Faille, Works of van Gogh, in their comments to F.453, note that Vase with Three Sunflowers, F.453, is a size 20 canvas and not a size 15 canvas as described. Vase
with Five Sunflowers, F.459, is not a size 25 canvas as described. However, the editors err in describing this canvas as close to a size 30 as the dimensions of F.459 are 98 x 69 cm. The size of these canvases is important as only size 30 canvases ultimately become part of the decoration for the Yellow House. See pp. 5-6.

12 It is clear that Vincent is referring to the same canvas in these two descriptions as in both letter 527, (c. 22 August, 1888), and letter 528, (c. 26 August, 1888), Vincent compares the canvas of fourteen sunflowers to, "une nature morte de coigns et de citrons". See n. 303.

13 See Hulsker, Van Gogh door Van Gogh, "Commentary" to letter 557, (24 October, 1888), p. 165, for the argument that establishes October 23 or 24, 1888, as the date for Gauguin's arrival in Arles.

14 See letter B15, (c. 18 August, 1888), letter 526, (c. August, 1888), and letter W6, (c. 21 August, 1888).

15 See pp. 2-3.

16 These references are listed in n. 285.

17 Vincent's references to the financial worth of the decoration canvases are discussed more fully in Chapter V.

18 See n. 285.

19 In letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), Vincent does identify one canvas as intended for the decoration of the Yellow House: "Ah, mon étude des vignes... je l'ai, toujours toile de 30 carrée, toujours pour la décoration de la maison". In letter B18, (c. 29 September, 1888), to Bernard, Vincent explains that he is occupied with his work on size 30 canvases intended for the decoration of the Yellow House. "Je suis... absolument absorbé par des toiles de trente carées qui m'éreintent considérablement et doivent me servier à décorer la maison". Later in this same letter Vincent lists six canvases (all size 30), which he has completed for his decoration. "La décoration de la maison m'absorbe terriblement.... Eh bien, j'ai moi, le Jardin du Poète (2 toiles).... Puis la Nuit étoilée, puis la vigne, puis les Sillons, puis la vue de la maison...."

20 In letter 553, (14 or 15 October, 1888), Vincent repeats that fifteen size 30 canvases have been completed for the decoration of the Yellow House. He asks Theo to let Seurat know that
"j'ai en train une décoration qui actuellement monté à 15 toiles de 30 carrées et qui pour former un tout en prendra au moins 15 autres...." It is not clear at precisely what point in September or October Vincent decided to use uniform size 30 canvases for his decoration. Of the first three sunflower canvases described in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), F. 453, F. 459, and F. 456, (see p. 2), only one, Vase with Twelve Sunflowers, F. 456 is a size 30 canvas, (see p. 2 and n. 11). The fourth sunflower subject described in letters 527, (c. 22 August, 1888), and 528, (c. 26 August, 1888), is also a size 30 canvas, (see pp. 2-3), and yet Vincent appears to have intended to have all four sunflower canvases as part of his decoration. (See p. 3). From letter 529, (29 August, 1888), up until the writing of letter 539, (18 September, 1888), nine canvases are described in the letters and are of varying sizes. These canvases, followed by the letter numbers in which they are announced are as follows: Portrait of Patience Escalier, F. 444, (for a discussion of the identification of this canvas see n. 268)-letter 528, (c. 26 August, 1888); a still life, Pair of Shoes, F. 461-letter 529, (c. 29 August, 1888); Portrait of Eugene Boch, F. 462-letter 531, (3 September 1888); The Night Café, F. 463-letter 533, (8 September, 1888); The Old Mill, F. 550, and Summer Evening, F. 465-letter 535, (10 September, 1888); The Poet's Garden, F. 468, Self Portrait, possibly F. 476, Café Terrace at Night, F.467-letter 537, (16 or 17 September, 1888). Of these nine canvases, only three are size 30, or close to size 30 in dimension: The Night Café, F. 463, (89 x 70 cm.), The Summer Evening, F. 465, (74 x 91 cm.), and The Poet's Garden, F. 468, (92 x 73 cm.). Only two, The Night Café, F. 463, and The Poet's Garden, F. 468 are described in letter 552, (13 October 1888), as decoration canvases. In letter 539 (18 September, 1888), Vincent describes his work on two canvases of parks. These canvases may be identified with two size 30 canvases, (see Jan Hulsker, "The Poet's Garden", Vincent, III, no. 1, (1974), p. 25). From letter 539, (18 September, 1888), up to and including letter 552, (13 October, 1888), with the exception of portrait descriptions, only work on size 30 canvases is described. In letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), Vincent describes the canvas The Vineyard, F. 475, in a way that indicates that Theo is aware of the plan to have the decoration canvases conform to a size 30. "Ah, mon étude des vignes, toujours toile de 30 carrée, toujours pour la décoration de ma maison". In letter B18, (c. 29 September, 1888), as has been pointed out in n. 19, Vincent describes his work on size 30 canvases, intended for the decoration of the house, and lists six of these canvases. It appears, then, that the decision to create a decoration of size 30 canvases must have been made at some point following letter 534, (9 September, 1888), in which it is implied that all of the sunflower canvases will be used to decorate Gauguin's room, (only two of the four sunflower canvases painted at this time are size 30: see pp. 2-3). The decision was probably made just prior to, or just following the writing of letter 539, (c. 18 September, 1888), as no letters after this date discuss (portraits excepted), other than size 30 canvases.
Arguments for the identification of works where Vincent's letter descriptions do not make a clear identification possible, will be presented in the individual analysis of these canvases in Chapter VI.

The first three canvases of this series are listed in letter 552, (13 October, 1888).

See letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), and p. 2.

Although Vincent's effort to achieve an expressive colour is recognized in the Van Gogh literature, there is no convincing analysis or interpretation of how Vincent sees colour as able to take on an expressive role. Kurt Badt, Die Farbenlehre Van Goghs, Cologne: M. Dumont Schauberg, 1961, is the only work that attempts to survey, with reference to Vincent's letters and painting, the evolution of Vincent's colour theory. While Badt observes the significance of complementary colour relationships to Vincent's vision in Nuenen and Arles, and his concern with achieving a colour that would parallel the expressive power of music, in Arles in 1888, Badt's interpretation of colour's expressive role is based on philosophical assessments of Vincent's subject matter, that for this writer at least, do not account successfully for Vincent's colour use at this time.

The decoration canvases as a whole, have not been examined in the Van Gogh literature. Julius Meier-Graefe, Vincent Van Gogh, New York: Literary Guild of America, 1933, pp. 131-2, relying on letter 552, (c. 13 October, 1888), observes that fifteen decoration canvases were painted by Vincent for the Yellow House and that these are only united by Vincent's efforts to render rich autumnal colour. Carl Nordenfalk, The Life and Work of Van Gogh, London: Elek Books, 1953, pp. 149-50, also notes that fifteen canvases were painted as a decoration. These are described as differing in no way from Vincent's previous work at Arles and Nordenfalk states that they were hung in the Yellow House only as this provided a means of exhibiting these works. Jan Hulsker, "The Poet's Garden", pp. 22-23, identifies the four decoration canvases intended for Gauguin's bedroom. However, no analysis of the colour, technique, or theme of these canvases is given in this article.

Gauguin's arrival in Arles on October 23 or 24, 1888, provides a convenient cut off date for this study for two reasons. First, it appears that Vincent intended to execute
size 30 canvases for the decoration following Gauguin's arrival in Arles. In letter 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), prior to Gauguin's arrival, Vincent indicates that he wishes to exhibit twelve size 30 canvases at some future date. This comment is a reference to a plan outlined in letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), in which Vincent had suggested that he exhibit a group of canvases entitled Décoration, in 1889. (see n. 285 for Vincent's references to this plan). Following Gauguin's arrival, Vincent indicates in letter 558a, (c. 21 November, 1888), that he wishes to postpone any such exhibit until thirty size 30 canvases are completed. It is likely that Vincent is referring to thirty size 30 canvases intended for the decoration of the Yellow House, (or at least grouped together as a decoration series), as in letter 553, (14 or 15 October, 1888), Vincent indicates that he conceives of a decoration series composed of thirty size 30 canvases: "Dites donc, que fait Seurat? Si tu le vois, dis-lui donc une fois de ma part que j'ai en train une décoration qui actuellement monte à quinze toiles de 30 carrées et qui pour former un tout en prendra au moins quinze autres..." A large number of size 30 canvases are painted following Gauguin's arrival in the fall and winter of 1888: The Sower, F. 450, described in letter 558a, (c. 21 November, 1888); The Sower, F. 494, described in letter 558b, (28 October, 1888); Les Alycamps, F. 486, and F. 487, described in letters 559, (c. 11 November, 1888), and B19a, (beginning of November, 1888); L'Arlesienne, F. 488, and The Red Vineyard, F. 495 described in letter 559, (c. 11 November, 1888); Memory of the Garden at Etten, F. 496, and The Novel Reader, F. 497, described in letter 562, (c. 2 December, 1888); Vincent's Chair, F. 498, and Gauguin's Chair, F. 499, described in letter 563, (c. 2-11 December, 1888). However, as Vincent never identifies these size 30 canvases as intended for the decoration, it remains a point of conjecture whether Vincent actually considered these canvases as related to the seventeen size 30 canvases painted prior to Gauguin's arrival. It should be pointed out that Vincent's original plan to continue his series of decoration canvases following Gauguin's arrival in Arles may have been discouraged (possibly inadvertently), by Gauguin himself. In a brief postscript to letter 558, (28 October, 1888), written a few days after Gauguin's arrival, Vincent notes that Gauguin has not yet commented on the decoration as a whole, although he has commented favourably on a few of the decoration canvases. This anticlimactic response to the project that had occupied Vincent for the preceding two months, may have quelled his enthusiasm for the project. The second reason why Gauguin's arrival in Arles provides a useful cut off date for this study of the decoration canvases, is that an examination of Vincent's art prior to his contact with Gauguin, removes the difficulty of assessing the impact of Gauguin's theory on art on Vincent, once the two had joined forces.
Vincent discusses his plan to move to Drenthe to devote himself to painting in letters 316, (c. 21 August, 1883), 317 (22 or 23 August 1883), 318 (2 September 1883) and 319 (c. 4 September 1883).


In letter 429 (end October, 1885), Vincent discusses the creation of a scale of colours in a painting that corresponds to, but does not imitate, the scale of colours that appear in nature, "Of nature I retain a certain sequence and a certain correctness in placing the tones, I study nature, so as not to do foolish things, to remain reasonable; however, I don't care so much whether my colour is exactly the same, so long as it looks beautiful on my canvas.... one loses that general harmony of tones in nature by painfully exact imitation; one keeps it by recreating in a parallel colour scale.... I repeat - starting from one's palette, from ones knowledge of the harmony of colours is quite different from following nature mechanically and servilely."

Vincent's allusion to "silvery tones" here, follows a passage where he has referred to the work of Anton Maure and Maris (a reference to either Jacob, Matthijs, or Willem Maris). These painters, like J.H. Weissenbruch and G.H. Breitner, comprised the "Hague school" - a group of landscape and genre painters who were noted for their palette of gray tonal harmonies that rendered evocative light effects. See, E.B. Greenshields, Landscape Painting and Modern Dutch Artists, New York: Baker and Taylor Co., 1906, and, D. Croal Thomson, The Brothers Maris, London; Offices of the Studio, 1907, for a discussion of the work of this group. In letters 415 (second half of June, 1885) and 417 (c. mid July, 1885), Vincent again spurns the silver and gray colour scheme characteristic of the Hague school.

Linda Nochlin, Realism, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971, pp. 115-122, and p. 197, and Brouwer, Siesling, and Vis, Anthon van Rappard, pp. 43-5, briefly discuss the art of Millet and Israels, and its influence on rural painters at this time.
33 The painted canvases of weavers executed in the first half of 1884 are F.26 (January, 1884), F.162 (January, 1884), F.29 (March - April, 1884), F.35 (April - May, 1884), F.30 (May, 1884), F.32 (May 1884), F.33 (May, 1884), f.37 (June, 1884), F.24 (July, 1884), F.27 (July, 1884).

34 In letter 367, (c. 30 April, 1884) Vincent describes the effect of the dark figures of the weavers standing out against lamplight. He also describes in this letter his work on a canvas of a weaver against a white wall - probably F.30 (May 1884) - in terms of the contrast between, "a dark silhouette", set against a white backdrop. Canvases such as F.35 (April - May, 1884), F.32 (May, 1884), F.37 (June, 1884), F.24 (July 1884), are compositions in which the weavers and looms are set against lighted windows or doorways. In F.29 (March - April, 1884), and F.30 (May, 1884) weavers and looms are set against light background walls. In F.33 (May, 1884), the dark figure of a weaver contrasts with the light cloth over which he is bent.

35 Vincent's admiration and emulation of dark colour schemes seems to have met with some opposition from Theo. For example in letter 371, (beginning of June, 1884), where Vincent describes the "deep colour scheme" that he has heard advocated by Israelis. He adds defensively, "I already know what you are going to say about 'too black' ...." It is also clear from this letter that Theo has made an attempt to explain impressionism to his brother, possibly to acquaint Vincent with the lighter palette of contemporary Paris art. Vincent's response, however, recapitulates his admiration for the "bister and bitumen" described in letter 368, (c. 15 May, 1884). He thus writes: "And from what you have told me about 'impressionism', I have concluded that it is different from what I thought, but it is not clear to me what it really is. But for my part, I find Israelis, for instance, so enormously great, that I am little curious about or desirous of newer things.... some of the present day painters rob us of the bister and bitumen ... which well applied, make the colouring ripe and generous."

36 Charles Blanc, Artistes de mon temps Paris, 1876. Vincent appears to have borrowed this book from the painter Anthon van Rappard. See letters R47, (August, 1884), and R48, (second half of September, 1884).

The artists Blanc discusses are Calamatta, David d'Angers, F. Duret, Angrand Dupré, M. Chevenard, Henry Leys, Leon Vandoyer, Hippolyte Flandrin, Grandville, Troyon, Gavarni, H. Regrault, Corot, Barye and Delacroix.


Indeed, Vincents enthusiasm for Delacroix begins from this point. Up until the spring of 1884, Vincent had never included Delacroix in his lists of artists he greatly admired. From this date to the end of his life Vincent makes frequent references to Delacroix and his art.

Blanc, *Artistes de mon temps*, pp. 64-5. Blanc, p. 64, credits these discoveries to two researchers, Charles Bourgeois, and M.E. Chevreul. Bourgeois was author of *Leçons expérimentales d'optique sur la lumière et les couleurs*, Paris, 1816-17, and *Manuel d'optique expérimental, à l'usage des artistes et des physiciens*, Paris, 1821. Homer, *Seurat*, p. 30 correctly notes that Bourgeois was responsible for the incorrect belief that white light was composed of blue, red and yellow light. Blanc draws primarily upon Chevreul's *De la loi contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortment des objets colorés*, Paris 1839, which was the result of Chevreul's researches into colour effects at the Golbeins tapestry works.

See n. 18. To facilitate a fuller comprehension of Blanc's summary of Chevreul's researches, comparisons with Chevreul's text will be provided in footnote references where relevant. In this study, citations from Chevreul are taken from, M.E. Chevreul, *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colours and their application to the Arts*, (based on the first english edition of 1850 as translated from the first french edition of 1839), New York: Rhinehold Publishing Corp., 1967.
the modifications in colours that result when a) different
tones of the same hue are looked at simultaneously, and,
b) different hues of the same tone, (Chevreul uses "tone" in
a general sense to indicate a hue mixed with either white or
black), are looked at simultaneously. In Ch. II, p. 61 f.,
these observations are reduced to the "law of simultaneous
contrast" which states, "In the case where the eye sees at
the same time two contiguous colors they will appear as
dissimilar as possible, both in their optical composition,
and in the height of their tone."

47 Blanc, Artistes de mon temps, p. 65.

48 Ibid., pp. 65-6.

49 Chevreul, in Part II of Principles of Harmony and
Contrast, p. 104 ff., observes the various colour combinat-
ions that are agreeable or disagreeable to the human eye.

50 Blanc, Artistes de mon temps, p. 66.

51 Ibid., p. 74. Optical mixing is discussed by Chevreul,
Principles of Harmony and Contrast, p. 153 ff. in the context
of the tapestry weaver's mixture of various coloured threads
to produce what is perceived as a single hue when viewed at
a distance. Chevreul points out, p. 159, that grays produced
by an optical mixture of complementaries tend to be of a
higher value than those that are produced by a mixture of
complementary pigments.

52 Blanc, Artistes de mon temps, p. 28. Lee Johnson
in Delacroix, London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1963,
pp. 62-70, examines Delacroix's familiarity with Chevreul's
colour laws.

53 Blanc, Artistes de mon temps, p. 67.

54 Ibid., p. 62. Blanc more than likely derived this
interpretation from Delacroix's own writings. Delacroix
writes for example, "Il y a une genre d'emotion qui est tout
particuliere a la peinture ... Il y a une impression qui
resulte de tel arrangement des couleurs, de lumières, et
d'ombres ... C'est qu'on appelle la musique du tableau ....
C'est ici qu'est la vraie superiorité de la peinture sur
l'autre art, car cette emotion s'adresse a la partie la
plus intime de l'âme ...." Eugène Delacroix, Oeuvres
litteraires, 2 vols., ed. by Elie Faure, Paris: Bibliotheque
dyonisienne, 1923, I, p. 63. An entry for May 20, 1853,
Journal d'Eugène Delacroix, 3 vol., ed. by André Joubin,
Paris 1950, II, pp. 55-6, also stresses the expressive power
of colour, line and chiaroscuro, and relates their total
effect to the harmony of music. "... si à une composition déjà intéressante par la choix du sujet, vous ajoutez une disposition de lignes qui augmente l'impression, un clair-obscur saisissant pour l'imagination, une couleur adaptée aux caractères, vous avez résolu un problème plus difficile, et encore une fois, vous êtes supérieur: c'est et ses combinaisons adaptées à un chant unique."

55"De même que l'on fait des musiciens au moins corrects et habiles en leurs enseignant le contre point, de même on peut former les peintres à ne pas commettre de fautes contre l'harmonie, en leur enseignant les phénomènes de la perception simultanée des couleurs... Ce qui ne peut sans doute se communiquer, ce qu'on me saurait apprendre, c'est l'âme, c'est l'inspiration, qui fait trouver au musicien un chant sublime comme la prière de Moïse, au coloriste une synthèse mélodieuse, un concert pathétique, comme le tableau de Hamlet devant le fossoyeur." Blanc, Artistes de mon Temps, p. 62. By comparing Delacroix's art to musical orchestration, Blanc is carrying on a common Delacroix comparison. George Sand in Impressions et Souvenirs, Paris, 1841, describes Delacroix' own experiments with analogies between colour and musical notes: "The master established a comparison between the tones of painting and the sounds of music. Harmony in music, he says, does not consist only of chord formations, but also of the relationship of chords... Now painting follows the same laws..." cited in Edward Lochspeiser, Music and Painting: A Study in Comparative Ideas from Turner to Schoenberg, London: Caswell and Co., 1973, pp. 44-5. George P. Mras, Eugène Delacroix's Theory of Art, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966, p. 41 ff., discusses the history of the association of music and painting, especially in relation to Romantic art of the early 19th century. René Jullian, "Delacroix et la musique du tableau," Gazette des beaux-arts, s. 6, LXXXVII (April, 1976), pp. 81-88, discusses Delacroix's formation of a harmony in painting that would correspond to musical harmony. His n. 1, p. 81, provides a bibliography on this subject.

56Blanc, Artistes de mon temps, p. 28.

57Letter 371 (Beginning of June, 1884): "In the same way that people nowadays no longer believe in fantastic miracles, no longer believe in a God who capriciously and despotsically flies from one thing to another... in the same way... I think that in art the old fashioned idea of innate genius, inspiration etc., I do not say must be put aside but thoroughly reconsidered, verified - and greatly modified."
The reference in this passage to the, "secret elements of orange," probably derives from Blanc's own terminology. See for example *Artistes de mon temps*, p. 60.

Although Chevreul, *Principles of Harmony and Contrast*, pp. 67-9, does consider black and white a complementary pair, Blanc, *Artistes de mon temps*, does not, and only describes them, p. 71, as "non - couleurs qui servent en separent les autres, à repose l'oeil à le rafraîchir, alors surtout qu'il pourrait être fatigué par l'extrême variété, autant que par l'extrême magnificence."

While the weaver canvases that comprise the major portion of Vincent's painted subject matter at this time (see n. 33) are still conceived in terms of a palette based on bister and bitumen (see letter 368 (ca. 15 May, 1884)), it is interesting to note that in at least one canvas painted following Vincents' introduction to complementary colours and their relationships in Blanc's, *Artistes de mon temps*, the use of complementary pairs is evident. In the canvas *Weaver and Loom*, F. 27 (July 1884) the indigo of the weavers'shirt is set against the orange-brown of his face and hands, the yellow-brown of the cloth on the loom suggests a contrast with the violet-gray wall behind and red and green highlight a long strap of the loom structure. All three complementaries presented in such close proximity, suggests a deliberate effort on Vincent's part to implement complementary pairs into his painting.


"La nature s'est donc servie du dessin pour définir les objets et de la couleur pour les nuancer." Blanc, Grammaire, p. 23. Blanc observes, p. 24: "Les couleurs varient suivant le milieu où elles se trouvent .... Il n'en est pas de même de la forme, qui conserve son caractère ...." It is no doubt this inherent superiority of line that leads Blanc to observe, p. 22, that: "Le dessin et le sexe masculin de l'art; la couleur est le sexe féminine." This male-female analogy is carried into the realm of painting as Blanc, p. 23, argues that the union of line and color are necessary to give birth to this art. He warns however that if colour, rather than line, dominates, then painting will fall, mankind fell because of Eve. The significance that Blanc gives to line in art, accords with his strong advocacy of Renaissance art, particularly the "Primitives," the 14th century Italian masters whose popularity in France in the last half of the 19th century may be linked to Blanc's efforts to acquire these works for French museums. See A. Boime, "Seurat and Piero della Francesca," Art Bulletin, p. 268.

"Le dessin n'est pas une simple imitation... Le dessin est un projet de l'esprit ... tout dessin est l'expression d'une pensée ou d'un sentiment ..." Blanc, Grammaire, p. 565. See also p. 532 for Blanc's outline of the expressive power of horizontal, vertical, curved, and jagged lines.


ibid., p. 599.

ibid.

Blanc, Grammaire p. 600. Rudolf Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 335-54 pursues a similar line of thought in his discussion of colour harmony. He observes p. 352, that complementary pairs, "show completeness as a balance of opposites," and that, "the eye spontaneously seeks out connects complementary colours." The significance of this point of view to Vincent's art in 1888 is discussed in Chapter IV, and VI.
71ibid., p. 603.

72ibid., p. 604.

73ibid. Blanc also uses the different hued threads of a shawl which together produce a single hue or tone, as an example of "le mélange optique".

74ibid., p. 605.

75ibid., p. 610.

76Vincent quotes almost verbatim from "Eugène Delacroix," Artistes de mon temps, pp. 64-5. The editors heading to this excerpt in letter 401 (c. 13-17 April, 1885), in the Complete Letters, incorrectly attributes this passage to Delacroix. Blanc's explanation of the colour laws as Delacroix's particular achievement, (see pp. 16-17 this thesis), no doubt accounts for Vincent's attribution of these colour relationships to Delacroix. In letter 430, (beginning of November, 1885), he also writes, "the laws of colours which Delacroix was the first to formulate...."

77In letter 406, (4 or 5 May, 1885) Vincent indicates that he feels Theo has understood his emphasis on broken and neutral colours that are formed from complementaries as he writes, "From what you say about the picture by Bésnard, I see that you understood what I wrote about broken colours, orange broken by blue, and the reverse. However there are many other colour scales but that of orange against blue is logical; so is yellow against violet, so is red against green."

78See n. 73.

79See p. 15.

80See letter 368, (c. 15 May, 1884), for Vincent's description of his use of bister and bitumen. That Vincent, in 1885, intends to render grays and dark colours from colours based on the three primaries, is repeated in letter 415, (second half of June, 1885).

81In letter 406, (4 or 5 May, 1885) Vincent observes, "peasants remind one of the earth, sometimes they seem modelled in it."
See letter 402,(beginning of April, 1885), and p.23.

See letter 370,(beginning of June 1884), quoted p. 18.

See letter 371,(beginning of June, 1884), quoted p. 18.

These portrait heads are first planned in the fall of 1884 and occupy Vincent's through the following winter and spring. See letters 383,(end of October, 1884), 384, (c. 1 November, 1884), 386 (c. mid November, 1884), 388a (31 January, 1885), 389,(mid December, 1884), 390,(c. 15-17 December, 1884), for references to this series. These peasant heads in fact led up to the composition of the Potato Eaters, F. 82. See letters 391,(end December, 1884), 396, (March, 1885) and 404,(c. 30 April, 1885). That Vincent also seeks to express the character and quality of peasant existence in his portraits is evidenced by his comment in letter 409,(c. 15 May, 1885) where he includes a sketch after: Head of a Peasant Woman with White Cap, F. 141, and writes "I haven't yet made a head so much 'peint avec de la terre', and more will follow now."

Letter R57,(second half of August, 1885).

See letter 402, (last week of April, 1885), quoted pp. 23-4, and 405,(beginning of May, 1885), quoted p. 26. his phrase is also used in letter 410,(c. 1 June, 1885), to describe the colour effects Vincent seeks in his rendition of peasant subjects. Vincent also uses the phrase, "peint avec de la terre" in letters 406, (4 or 5 May, 1885), and 409, (c. 15 May, 1885) to describe peasant pictures that have captured the character of peasant life.

Felix Braquemond, Du Dessin et de la couleur, Paris, 1885.

In n. 76, it is pointed out that Blanc presented his colour principles as the achievement of Delacroix.

Vincent also makes reference to Silvestre in letter 428,(second half of October, 1885).

92 See pp. 16-17.


96 See n. 55, especially, René Jullian, "Delacroix et la musique de la tableau," pp. 81-88.


98 In entry 435c of the *Complete Letters*.

99 Vincent describes complementary pairs as logical in letter 406 (4 or 5 May, 1885): "there are many other colour scales too, but that of orange against blue is logical; so is yellow against violet, so is red against green".

100 For Vincent's continued concern with complementary colours to the end of the Nuenen period, see letter 426, (10 or 11 October, 1885), where Vincent analyzes a Frans Hals painting in terms of complementary pairs; letter 428, (second half of October, 1885) where Vincent describes a still life of apples in terms of the complementary contrasts and admixtures he has used; and letter 430, (beginning of November, 1885) in which Vincent acknowledges that he is, "completely absorbed in the laws of the colours."

101 See pp. 23-28

102 See letters 520, (11 August 1888), and 539, (18 September, 1888), quoted pp. 7-9.

103 See letter 459, (beginning of March, 1886), and letter 463, (21 February, 1888).

104 See letter 371, (beginning of June, 1884), and n. 35; also letter 402, (last week of April, 1885), and letter 459, (August - October, 1886), quoted p. 35.
See letter 371, (beginning of June, 1884), and letter 402, (last week of April, 1885). Theo played an important role in recognizing current developments in the contemporary Paris art scene. For a discussion of his relationship to artists working in the 1880's see John Rewald, "Theo van Gogh, Goupil, and the Impressionists," Gazette des Beaux Arts, s. 6, LXXXI (January - February, 1973), pp. 1-64.

The term "orthodox impressionist" is taken from Sven Loevgren, The Genesis of Modernism. Seurat, Gauguin, Van Gogh and French Symbolism in the 1880's, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971, p. 58, and will be used in this thesis to indicate the group of impressionist painters who through the 1870's and early 1880's worked toward recreating the impact and effects of light in nature. This involved a progressive lightening of the palette, and the gradual elimination of strong value contrasts in favour of hue contrasts. For a brief outline of these developments, see Homer, Seurat, pp. 56-7, and Brown, Pissarro, pp. 95-169. Kurt Swiler Champa, Studies in Early Impressionism, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, discusses in more detail the pictorial developments in the work of Monet, Sisley, and Bazille in the 1870's.

See n. 105.

Loevgren, Modernism, p. 58. The "Exposition Internationale" was held from June 15 - July 15, 1886.

Loevgren, Modernism, p. 12.

Mark Roshill, Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Impressionist Circle, London: Thames and Hudson, 1969, Chapter I, "Impressionism: A Reconsideration of its Relevance during the 1880's," discusses briefly the art of Gauguin, Seurat, Lautrec and Vincent in terms of their passage through and beyond the impressionism of Monet, Renoir and Pissarro. As Loevgren, Modernism, pp. 8-13, and pp. 56-8, points out, the orthodox impressionists (Monet, Renoir, Sisley) were finally unwilling to participate in the May 15, 1886 exhibit at the Maison Doré, Rue Lafitte, (see p. 32) because the works of many of the exhibiting artists were no longer impressionist in character.

The following is a summary of John Rewald's brief outline of the impressionist exhibitions in Camille Pissarro,
London: Thames and Hudson, 1963, pp. 26-36. The first impressionist exhibition had been held in 1873, as an alternative to the annual salon, when artists such as Sisley, Pissarro, Guillaumin, Degas, Renoir, and Berthe Morisot, formed the Association of Independant Painters. The label "impressionist" was given these painters in response to the 1874, (or second impressionist) exhibit. The 7th impressionist exhibit of 1882 was the last show held for four years and was the final group exhibit of this nature participated in by Renoir, Monet and Sisley. For the circumstances and internacine disagreements associated with the Rue Lafitte exhibit see Loevgren, Modernism, pp. 56-7; Camille Pissarro, Lettres à son fils Lucien, ed. by John Rewald, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1950, letter of February 16, 1886, pp. 94-95, letter of March 5, 1886 pp. 96-98, and letter of March 1886 pp. 101-103. See also John Rewald, The History of Impressionism, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971, pp. 521-529.

112 See n. 111. Loevgren, Modernism, p. 57, also lists Zandomeneghi, Forain, Odilon Redon, Marie Braquemond, Charles Tillot, Henry Rouart, Vignon, Emile Schuffenecher, la comtisse de Rambure, and David Estoppey as participants in the Rue Lafitte exhibition.


114 Felix Fénéon writer and art critic, so termed the art of Seurat and his circle in "L'Impressionisme aux Tuileries", L'Art Moderne, 19 September, 1886, p. 302. For a discussion of the origin of the term, see Homer, Seurat, pp. 161-62.

115 See Homer, Seurat, pp. 56-65, and Brown, Pissarro, pp. 95-107, and pp. 147-169.

116 As Homer, Seurat, p. 57, observes, the brushwork of orthodox impressionism is variable: "It appears in Impressionist paintings as comma-shaped, in short dashes, spots, hatching, and in a multitude of other indefinable forms."

For a discussion of the focus and vision characterized by the concern with light and colour in orthodox impressionism, see Brown, *Pissarro*, pp. 66-73.

These two terms were applied to the art of the orthodox impressionists because the rendition of light and colour in their canvases was not bound by any clearly defined theory. Seurat for example, in a letter to Fénéon of 1891, cited in Homer, *Seurat*, p. 17, cites the "intuition of Monet and Pissarro," as important to his own evolution of theory and technique. Pissarro in a letter of March 1886, *Lettres*, p. 100, refers to impressionist painters as "romantiques," who will not accept or understand the theories underlying Seurat's systematic technique. A letter of November 1886, terms these painters "impressionistes romantiques". A letter of January 9, 1887, *Lettres*, p. 124, repudiates Monet's technique which is described as, "le desordre qui ressort de cette fantasie romanesque qui, malgré le talent de l'artiste, n'est pas en accord avec notre époque."


ibid.


In the "Les Impressionistes" article Fénéon's description refers specifically to Seurat's *Le dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte*, that was exhibited at Rue Lafitte.

Homer, Seurat, p. 133, and Herbert, "Seurat's Theories," p. 29, describe how several variations of a hue are used to depict the local colour of an object or area.


See Homer, Seurat, pp. 8-10, for a discussion of additive and subtractive colour mixtures.

See Homer, Seurat, pp. 139-146, and Herbert "Seurat's Theories," p. 30, for an analysis of the way in which optical mixing is to work in a neoimpressionist canvas.

See n. 51. and n. 129.


Fénéon refers specifically to only one of the texts that Seurat studied. He lists in the "Les Impressionistes" article, O.N. Rood's, *Théorie scientifique des couleurs et ses applications à l'art et à l'industrie, 1881*, the French translation of *Modern Chromatics*, New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1870. Fénéon also makes reference to theories of Heinrich Wilhelm Dove in this article. Homer, Seurat, p. 143, suggests that Seurat's (and Fénéon's) knowledge of Dove's *Darstellung der Farbenlehre und optische Studien*, Berlin, 1853, is dependant on a brief reference in Rood's text. Seurat's letter to Fénéon of 1891, cited in Homer, Seurat, p. 17, lists the texts which were important to Seurat's understanding of colour and light, and their re-creation on the canvas surface. Included are Charles Blanc's *Artistes de mon temps*, 1876, and Grammaire des arts du dessin, 1867, David Sutter's "Phénomène de la vision" L'Art, XX, 1880, pp. 74-76, 124-8, 147-9, 195-7, 216-20, 268-9; and Rood's, *Théorie scientifique des couleurs*. For a discussion of the influence of these texts on Seurat, see Homer, Seurat, pp. 17-48 and ff., and Herbert, "Seurat's Theories," pp. 23-42.

135 See especially Feneon's, "L'Impressionisme aux Tuileries," pp. 301-302; "Le Neo-impressionisme" L'Art Moderne, May 1, 1887, p. 138; and, Les Impressionistes en 1886, p. 43, in which neoimpressionism as a reform of "orthodox impressionism" is emphasized.

136 See Pissarro's letter of January 9, 1887, cited in n. 119.


138 Written in English.

139 The influence of Monticelli on Vincents' art at this time is noted pp. 48-9.

140 In the following discussion of Vincent's attempts to paint with a lighter palette, and then to assume a brushwork and use of colour that is a variant of the neoimpressionist technique, I do not wish to imply that Vincent worked through the problems of style and technique associated with impressionism of the late 1870's and early 1880's and then like Camille Pisaarro, launched into neoimpressionist technique as a solution to certain pictorial dilemmas implicit in that evolution. (See Loevgren, Modernism, pp. 12-13, for a very brief outline of the crises in Pissarro's art in 1883 that led him to abandon impressionism). While Vincent's exploration of landscape subjects in 1886, prior to his adoption of a neoimpressionist variant, do owe aspects of subject matter and style to impressionism as Roskill, the Impressionist Circle, pp. 11-56, has pointed out, it should not be surmised that Vincent condensed the formal evolution of those who progressed from impressionism to neoimpressionism, in any deliberate way.
By hue contrast, I mean here that Vincent has distinguished between the objects in the still life, and the background, solely by means of colour differentiation. The red, white, and pink gladioli contrast with the bright blue of the wall behind. In an earlier canvas, such as Bowl with Pansies F. 244 (spring 1886) this differentiation is still achieved by a value difference i.e. the background is a light gray-green, and the dark green leaves and red-brown petals of the flowers are set off by this (albeit slight) value contrast.

The phrase is from Roskill, The Impressionist Circle, p. 42, who uses this canvas as an example of Vincent's ability to render "fluidity of atmosphere", and "open up the space as a whole" - developments which Roskill links to Vincent's contact with impressionism, and to the possible tuition of Camille Pissarro.


See p. 32.

Gustave Coquiot, Les Indépendants, 1884-1920, Paris: Librairie Ollendorf, n. d. This group was formed in the spring of 1884 by artists such as Redon, Cross, Seurat, and Signac, in order to hold unjuried shows. See Sutter, The NeoImpressionists, p. 215, for a short chapter that outlines the formation and history of this group. Loevgren, Modernism, p. 75, states that 350 artists took part in the exhibit held in the late summer of 1886.

See Loevgren, Modernism, pp. 213, n. 91.

See chapter I. Vincent's interest in the effects of complementary colours was no doubt furthered by his reading of Emile Zola's L'Ouevre, noted in letter 444,

148 Herbert, "Seurat's Theories," p. 29, describes complementary colours, and Chevreul's concept of simultaneous contrast (see pp. 15-16, and n. 46), and successive contrast (see p. 22), as the key to neoimpressionist theory.


150 See p. 33.

151 See Fénéon's description of this canvas quoted pp. 32-3.

152 Roskill, The Impressionist Circle, p. 89, points to Vincent's contact with Signac as a probable influence of Vincent's directionalized brushwork.

153 See pp. 32-3.

154 See p. 33.

155 Gustave Kahn reviewed this work, which was shown at the Salon des Indépendants in April, 1888. In "Peinture: Exposition des Indépendants," La Revue Indépendante, no. 18 (April, 1888), p. 163, cited in Welsh-Ovcharon, Van Gogh in Perspective, p. 52, Kahn notes that "Mr. Van Gogh has a vigourous brushstroke in his large landscapes, and cares very
little for the value and exactitude of his tones." As Welsh Ovcharvn, Van Gogh in Perspective, p. 52, observes, this criticism of Vincent's use of colour and technique underlines Kahn's point of reference, neoimpressionism's detailed division of tones.

156 Park in Spring, F. 362, (May 1887) treats the problem of a lighted foreground of grass and flowers, set against a backdrop of shaded trees. Undergrowth, F. 309a, (summer 1887) attack the compositional problems of a foreground that is shaded and receives only sunlight filtered through tall trees, with a middle ground clearing that is hit by sunlight behind which stand more tall and shade producing trees. In Undergrowth (reproduced upside down in de la Faille, The Complete Works, p. 152), both the fore and middle ground underbrush are in total shade, and only a patch of grass and bush in the back ground receives sunlight.

157 See p. 33.


162 See letters B 1, (summer, 1887), and 510, (22 July, 1888), and Bernard's reminiscences of Vincent, cited in Welsh-Ovcharon, Van Gogh in Perspective, pp. 37-41.


166 See pp. 38-41.

167 The Flowering Plum Tree, F. 371, (first half of 1887); The Bridge in the Rain, F. 372, (summer, 1887); The Actor, F. 373, (summer 1887). The specific prints that have been established as Vincent's sources for these canvases, are noted in the "editors note" for each of the above entries in de la Faille, The Complete Works.

168 See Roskill, The Impressionist Circle, pp. 57-85 and Sullivan, Eastern and Western Art, p. 279, for a discussion of the distinction between "Japoniserie," (the incorporation of Japanese objects into a composition to suggest pictorial effects and techniques that are utilized in Japanese art). See Roskill, The Impressionist Circle, pp. 80-84 for an analysis of Vincent's Japonisme during this period.


See pp. 38-41.

See pp. 38-41.

See letters 468, (10 March, 1888), 473, (first week of April, 1888), and W 4, (c. 24-28 June, 1888).


See for example, letters B2, (18 March, 1888) and 500, (23 June 1888), the relevant passages of which are cited in n. 174. Also in letter W 7, (9 and 16 September, 1888), Vincent recommends the study of Japanese prints as, "le moyen le plus pratique pour arriver à comprendre la direction qu'actuellement a prise la peinture colorée et claire." The association of the palette of impressionists with the colours used in Japanese prints was not uncommon. For example Theodore Duret had emphasized that the juxtaposition of pure colours found in the Japanese print had shown impressionist painters how to render the intense hues found in nature. See "L'Art Japonais" (1884), in Critique d'Avant Garde, Paris, 1885, p. 63ff., cited in Orton, "Vincent's Interest in Japanese Prints," p. 3.
See letter 463, (21 February, 1884).

See for example letters B2, (18 March, 1888): "le pays me paraît aussi beau que le Japon pour la limpidité de l'atmosphere et les effets de couleur gaie."; W 2 (c. end February, 1888): "You see that I have penetrated some greater distance into the South.... What they want in pictures nowadays is a contrast of colours, and these colours highly intensified and variegated, rather than subdued gray tones. So... I thought I should do nobody any harm if I went to the spot that attracted me."; W 3, (30 March, 1888): "You will understand that nature in the South cannot be painted with the palette of Mauve, for instance who belongs to the North, and who is, and will remain, a master of the gray. But at present the palette is distinctly colourful, sky blue, orange, pink, vermilion, bright yellow, bright green, bright wine-red, violet."

See letters W 2, (c. end February, 1888) and W 3, (30 March, 1888), the relevant passages of which are cited in n. 177. Vincent sees such hue contrasts occurring naturally under the southern sun. In letter B 6, (c. 24 June, 1888) he observes that, "le ceil du midi et la Mediteranée bleue provoquent un orangé d'autant plus intense que la gamme des bleus est plus montée de ton." In letter 538, (18 September, 1888) Vincent explains, "non seulement en Afrique, mais même à partir d'Arles, vous trouverez naturellement les belles oppositions des rouges et des verts, des bleus et des orangés, du soufre et du lilas." In letter W 4, (c.24-28 June, 1888), Vincent explains to Wil that he shares many of the colour theories of the impressionist painters. He then describes flower subjects in terms of three complementary pairs (blue-orange, lilac-yellow, red-green). He then adds that "These are the fundamentals, which one may subdivide further, and elaborate, but quite enough to show you without the help of a picture that there are colours which cause each other to shine brilliantly, which form a couple, which complete each other like man and woman.... Colourings, wall papers and what not could be made much prettier by paying attention to the laws of colours."

At a later point in this same letter Vincent observes how complementary pairs are characteristically found together in the south. Describing the variations of blues to be found in Arles, Vincent adds:'Of course this calls up orange.... Furthermore, on account of the many yellow hues, violet gets a quick emphasis...."
See Chapter I.

See n. 148.

See letters W2, (c. end February, 1888) and W3, (30 March, 1888), the relevant passages of which are cited in n. 177. Also letter 477a, (20 or 21 April, 1888) quoted p. 45.

See n. 174, and also letter, B2, (18 March 1888), cited n. 177 above. In letter 469, (c. 17 March 1888) Vincent writes, "je me sens au Japon..."; letter 483, (c. 7 May, 1888): "Et puis j'espère que plus tard d'autres artistes surgiront dans à beaux pays, pour faire ici que les Japonais ont fait chez eux."; letter 500, (23 June, 1888): "Je voudrais que tu passes quelques temps ici...on voit avec un oeil japonais, on sent autrement couleur." In letter B22, (17 October, 1888) to Gauguin, Vincent recalls his excitement at seeing Arles and describes his efforts to see the landscape as Japanese in character as childish.

See Apricot Trees in Blossom, F. 399; The White Orchard, F. 403; Orchard in Blossom, F. 404; The Pink Orchard, F. 555; Orchard in Blossom with Yellow Enclosure, F. 551; Orchard: White Blossoms and Violet Branches, F. 552; Orchard in Blossom, F. 511; Orchard Surrounded by Cypresses, F. 513; Corner of an Orchard, F. 553; Orchard in Flower, F. 554; Apricot Trees in Bloom, F. 556; Almond Tree in Blossom, F. 557; Orchard in Blossom, F. 406. Several of these orchard canvases were to be grouped together as part of a decoration series. In letter 477, (c. 11-14 April, 1888) Vincent groups F. 403, F. 404, and F. 555 together. In this letter Vincent also indicates that he plans 3 groups of 3 canvases each, as part of a decoration scheme. In letter 480, (1 May, 1888) Vincent again refers to his orchard decoration. W. Scherjon and Jos. de Gruyter, Vincent van Goghs Great Period. Arles, St. Remy, and Auvers sur Oise, 2 vol., Amsterdam, 1937, vol. I, pp. 48-52, list 3 groups of 3 canvases as part of Vincent's orchard decoration. These groups are composed of F. 403, F. 404, F. 455; F. 556, F 405, F. 553; F. 551, F. 557, F. 513.

See n. 167.

Orchard Surrounded with Cypresses, F. 513, is described as a pendant to Orchard in Blossom with Yellow Enclosure, F. 551, a canvas of the same size, (65x81cm.).
In letters 486, (10 May, 1888), and 492 (c. 29 May, 1888). In these letters Orchard in Blossom with Yellow Enclosure, F. 551, is described as exhibiting, "beaucoup de pointille." The stippling or pointilist technique used throughout this canvas can be discerned in the black and white de la Faille reproduction of F. 551. The two canvases, then, seem to deliberately explore two opposite means of expressing light and colour.

186 See p. 40.

187 See letter B 3, (9 April, 1888), cited p. 45. Not all of Vincent's orchard canvases partake of these simplified colour effects. In the three canvases of Vincent's orchard triptych (see letter 477, (c. 11-14 April, 1888)), The White Orchard, F. 403, The Peach Tree, F. 404, and, The Pink Orchard, F. 555, the leaves and blossoms of the orchard trees are not only rendered by means of small touches of pigment, but the areas of grass are rendered in terms of the dashes of pigment that juxtapose hue contrasts in the foreground, and small interval contrasts in the background, reminiscent of Vincent's use of hue contrast and brushwork in works such as View from Montmartre, F. 316, of the spring of 1887. (see p. 40) Combined with this technique of small pigment touches and hue contrasts, is a linear emphasis created by the delineating brushstrokes that assert the simplified contours of tree trunks and branches. In The Pink Orchard, F. 555, the tree trunks and branches of the orchard are filled in by a flat violet hue. There is a certain incoherence of form and space that results from the oscillation between a technique that implies a focus on variances in colour and light, and one that reduces these factors to simplified elements: characteristic form and characteristic colour. Vincent was aware of this inconsistency in technique as he remarks to Bernard in letter B 3, (9 April, 1888), "je suis pris par les arbres fruiteurs en fleurs ... Ne suis aucune système de touche. Je tape sur la toile à coups irregulière, que je laisse tels quel's. Des empâtements, des endroits de toile pas couverte par-ci, par-là, des coins laisses totalement inachevés, des reprises, des brutalités; enfin le resultat est, je suis porté à le croire, assez inquietant et agacant pour que ça ne fasse pas le bonheur des gens a idées arrêtés d'avance sur la technique."

188 See p. 41.
Vincent also writes in letter B 6, (c. 24 June, 1888), "le ciel du midi et la Méditerranée bleue, provoquent un orange d'autant plus intense que la gamme des bleus est plus montée de ton."

Vincent notes in letter 500, (c. 23 June, 1888) that he has just heard (probably via Bernard) of an article in the Revue Indépendante that discusses the Japanese influence on Anquetin. The article referred to is Edouard Dujardin's "Aux XX et aux Indépendants": Le Cloisonisme," La Revue Indépendante, March 1888, pp. 489 f., cited in Loevgren, Modernism, p. 132. Dujardin attributes "un trace en dehors, une coloration violente et arrêtée," to the influence of the Japanese print, and Images d'Epinal, and defines Anquetin's work as seeking, "le moindre nombre possible de lignes et de couleurs caractéristiques..." While Vincent's awareness of Anquetins art of simplified lines and colours (see Loevgren, Modernism, p. 48 and pp. 130-2, and Roskill, The Impressionist Circle, p. 107), leads him to liken Le Pont de l'Anglois, F. 397 to Anquetin's work, he was quick to point out in letter 500, (c. 23 June, 1888) that he personally felt that Bernard and not Anquetin had gone farther in terms of "la japonaiserie", and that Seurat should be considered "le chef du petit Boulevard."

In letter 469, (c. 17 March, 1888), Vincent writes, "je crois à la nécessité absolue d'un nouvel art de la couleur, du dessin.

This letter was originally written in english.

Aaron Sheon, "Monticelli and van Gogh," Apollo, LXXXV (June 1967), pp. 444-48, discusses Vincent's access to Monticelli's art. Sheon points out that in his first months in Paris, Vincent shared a room with Alexander Reid, who was a student at Cormon's and a collector of Monticelli's work. Letter 464, (c. 25 February, 1888) refers to the van Gogh brothers attempts to collect Monticelli's works in Marseilles, and Reid's chagrin at their jump on that corner of the market. Vincent in this letter notes that the two brothers own five Monticelli's, one of which was a gift from Reid. See also T. J. Honeyman, "Van Gogh. A Link with Glasgow," Scottish Art Review, II, no. 2, (1948), pp. 16-17.


ibid.

See Chapter I.
Delacroix spent the first five months of 1832 in North Africa. For a survey of Delacroix's use of colour with attention given to the impact of the North African sojourn see Johnson, *Delacroix*, pp. 62-70.

In letter 471,(24 March, 1888), Vincent had likened Monticelli's use of colour to Delacroix's: "Que Montecelli prenait quelquefois un bouquet de fleurs pour motif de rassembler sur un seul panneau toute la gamme de ses tons les plus riches et les mieux équilibrés. Et qu'il faut aller directement à Delacroix pour trouver à ce point l'orchestration des couleurs."

In letter 626a,(10 or 11 February, 1890), written to Albert Aurier (in response to Aurier's article "Les Isolés: Vincent van Gogh", *Mercure de France*, I (January 1890), pp. 24-29) Vincent suggests that Monticelli was familiar with the same colour laws that Delacroix was purported to use in his art. Vincent writes of Monticelli, "il n'y a pas de coloriste venant aussi droit et directement de Delacroix; et pourtant est-il probable, à mon avis que Monticelli ne tenait que de seconde mais les theories de la couleur de Delacroix...."

See letter 471,(24 March, 1888) quoted n. 198. In letter 476,(c. 10-14 April, 1888) Vincent observes that Delacroix's favourite colours were, "des deux couleurs les plus condamnées ... le citron et le bleu de Prusse. Cependant il me semble qu'il en ait fait des superbes avec cela, des bleus et des jaunes citron." In letter 497 (12 or 13 June, 1888), the colours of the south are compared to those used by Delacroix. "Dans tout il y a maintenant du vieil or, du bronze, du cuivre dirait-on, et cela, avec l'azur vert du céil chauffée à blanc, cela donne une couleur delicieuse, excessivement harmoniieuse, avec des tons rompus à la Delacroix." In letter 503,(c. 6 July 1888), Vincent praises the exaggerated colour effects in Delacroix's *Christ on the Sea of Genesareth*. Letter B 8,(c. 1 July, 1888) also discusses Delacroix's dramatic use of colour in this canvas. The implications of Vincent's concern with evocative attributes of colour indicated in letter 503,(c. 6 July, 1888) and letter B 8,(c. 1 July, 1888), will be discussed further in Chapter IV of this thesis.

While Vincent does not directly state that he is thinking of Delacroix when he makes this allusion to Africa in letter 538,(18 September, 1888), Vincent clearly links...
Delacroix's trip to Africa with colour exaggeration. "Pourquoi le plus grand coloriste de tous, Eugène Delacroix a-t-il juge indispensable d'aller dans le midi et jus qu'en Afrique? Evidement, puisque et non seulement en Afrique, mais même à partir d'Arles, vous trouverez naturellement les belles oppositions des rouges et des verts, des bleus et des orangés, du souffre et du lilas."


203 "...il (le romancier) devra savoir eliminer, parmi les menus evenements innomorables et quotidiens ... en mettre en lumiere, d'une façon spéciale tous ceux qui seraient demeurés inaperçus pour des observateurs peu clairvoyants et qui donnent au livre sa portée, sa valeur d'ensemble."

ibid., p. XIII

204 ibid., p. XVI.

205 ibid., p. XV. de Maupassant, p. XIV, also observes concerning the elimination of extraneous detail from the artist's presentation: "Voilà pourquoi l'artiste, ayant choisi son thème, ne prendra dans cette vie encombrée de hasards et de futilités que les détails caractéristique utiles à son sujet et il rejettera tout l'à côté."

206 ibid., p. XXIV.

207 See p. 41.

208 See p. 45, and p. 47.

209 See p. 51, and n. 205.

210 Quoted in n. 174.

211 de Maupassant, "Le Roman," p. XIV.

212 Vincent probably also uses Monet as an example of a modern colourist and landscape artist as Theo was at this time negotiating an exhibit of 10 of Monet's canvases. See letters 483, (c. 7 May, 1888), 498, (c. 15 or 16 June, 1888), and 501a, (c. 27 June, 1888), for Vincent's references to this Monet exhibit.
At the outset of Vincent's artistic major focus was the human figure. See for example letter 134, (20 August, 1880). In Paris, unable to afford models, as he had in Nuenen, he explains in W 1, (summer or fall, 1887), that his primary interest is in painting the figure. In Arles he again asserts that figures and portraits are his major interest, and the highest genre in art. See for example letters B 13, (c. 31 July, 1888), and B 15, (c. 18 August, 1888).

In describing this canvas to Bernard in B 5, (c. 19 May, 1888), Vincent remarks on the striking contrast between the violet band of lilacs and the field of yellow, thus re-emphasizing his eye for complementary colour contrasts.

This canvas is however a smaller study (45x50cm), than the View with Irises F. 409, (54x65cm.), and this may have some affect on Vincent's concern with the simplification and exaggeration of colour and light effects in View with Irises, F. 409.

Mark Roskill, "Van Gogh's Blue Cart and His Creative Process," Oud Holland, LXXXI, no. 1 (1966) p. 7, also notes: "There is ... one basic colour per bush or per field in the painting. It may modulate tonally, but never to such a degree that another main colour becomes involved ...."

Letter B 5, (c. 19 May, 1888): "C'est donc une variation de bleus, égayée par une série de jaunes qui vont jusqu'a l'orange;" Letter 489, (c. 19 May, 1888): "donc six bleus différents et quatre ou cinq jaunes et orangés.


Vincent had been concerned in the preceding weeks with reed drawings of similar hill top views of La Crau (see letters 490, (26 May, 1888) and 492, (c. 29 May, 1888) ).
In letter B 10, (22 July, 1888), Vincent describes two of these views (F. 1420 and F. 1424) as, "une immense campagne plate-vue à vol d'oiseau du haut d'une colline - des vignes, des champs de blé moissonnés. Tout cela multiplie a l'infini, détalant comme la surface d'une mer vers l'horizon borné par les monticules de la Crau." These reed with their linear emphasis may have affected the emphases of contours and delineation of forms in The Harvest, F. 412.

Vincent refers to his plan for this trip in letter 494 (c. 6 June, 1888). See also letters 495, (9 June, 1888); 496, (12 June, 1888), 497, (12 or 13 June, 1888), and 498, (c. 15 or 16 June, 1888), that discuss the postponement of this trip. Letters 499, (22 June, 1888), and 500, (23 June, 1888) are written from Saintes Maries.

Vincent also observes at the end of this passage that black and white are able to produce a simultaneous contrast which is "agréable à l'œil tout autant que celui du bleu avec l'orange." Vincent considered black and white as complementary pairs in Nuenen. (See p. 19.)

See p. 53.

See Chapter IV.

It should be pointed out that Vincent later worked over the colour areas of The Sower, F. 422, after letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888) was written. He explains in letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888): "J'ai travaillé hier et aujourd'hui au semeur, qui est complètement remanié."

Letter B 7 (c. 28 June, 1888): "Voici un croquis d'un semeur: mottes de terres labourée, franchement violet en grande partie. Champ de blé mûr, d'un ton d'ocre jaune avec un peu de carmin. Le ciel, jaune de chrome presque aussi clair que le soleil lui-même qui est jaune de chrome 1 avec un peu de blanc, tandis que le reste du ciel est jaune de chrome 1 et 2 mélanges. Très jaune donc. La blouse du semeur est bleue et son pantalon blanc.... Il y a bien des rappels de jaunes dans le terrain, des tons neutres resultant du mélange du violet avec le jaune...."

See pp. 23-28, for the significance of complementary admixtures to the rendition of earth colours in Vincent's work at Nuenen.
The last paragraph quoted here is preceded by the statement: "Voici ce que j'ai voulu dire pour le blanc et le noir"...This is no doubt a reference to Vincents' previous letter B 6,(c. 24 June, 1888), to Bernard, in which he had argued that black and white should be considered complementary colours able to produce a simultaneous contrast. See n. 224.

See note 227.

Lee Johnson, "Burlington Magazine, XCVIII" (September 1956), p. 329, n. 10, points out that Vincent must have seen this Delacroix canvas at the Exposition des Maitres du Siècle which was held at 3 Rue Bayard, off the Champs Elysées in April-May 1886. To both Theo in letter 503,(c. 1 July, 1888) Bernard in B 8,(c. 1 July, 1888) Vincent misquotes the title of the Christ on the Lake of Gennesaret.

See for example letters 134 ,(20 August, 1880), 136,(24 September, 1880), 396,(March, 1885), 400,(c. 13 April 1885), and R 57,(second half of August 1885).

In letter 418,(July, 1885), quoted p. 53, Vincent discusses the necessity of departing from accurate drawing in order to express the action and character of a peasants' or labourers' movements. Millet and Lhermitte are cited as examples of artists who have succeeded in capturing the character and quality of rural activity.

See letter 477a ,(20 or 21 April, 1888)

See n. 178.

This letter was written at a time when Vincent was painting the Night Café', F463, a canvas that was ultimately part of the decoration of canvases for the Yellow House. It is interesting to note that Vincent concludes this passage that discusses emotive properties of colour in relation to The Sower F. 422. With another allusion to Delacroix's Christ on the Sea of Gennesaret (Vincent again calls the painting Barque du Christ). Vincent cites a critic's response to this canvas, "Je ne savais pas qu'on pouvait être aussi terrible avec du bleu et du vert."
238 See p. 41.

239 See p. 27.

240 See n. 178

241 This passage is quoted p. 68. The reference to white as able to rest the eye may derive from Charles Blanc. See n. 59.

242 See p. 15.

243 See letter B 7 (c. 28 June, 1888), quoted p. 68.

244 Zola's *Germinal* was first published in 1885.

245 See letter 409 (c. 15 May, 1885), and letter 410 (c. 1 June, 1885).


247 Zola achieves much of his effect in his opening passage through the evocative use of syntax which underlines the rhythmical interdependence between the sower and his work. "Jean, ce matin-là un semoir de toile bleue sur la ventre entenait la poche ouvertre de la main gauche, et de la droite, tous les trois pas, il y prenait une poignée de blé, que d'un geste, à la volée, il jetait. Ses gros souliers trouaient et emportaient la terre grasse, dans le balancement cadencé de son corps; tandis que, a chaque jet, au milieu de la semence blond toujours volante, on voyait luire des deux galons rouges d'une veste d'ordonance, qu'il achevait d'user. Seul, en avait, il marchait, *La Terre*, Paris: Bibliot- Charpentier, 1926, p. 1.

248 Vincent uses a similar image in letter W 4 (c. 24-28 June, 1888). After outlining motifs based on complementary pairs he adds, "there are colours which cause each other to shine brilliantly, which form a couple, which complete each other like man and woman."
For example blue/orange contrasts appear in such landscapes as The Wheatfield, F. 411, and The Harvest, F. 412, discussed pp. 58-63. Yellow/violet contrasts are used in View with Irises, F. 409, and The Sower, F. 422, discussed pp. 55-7 and pp. 66-75.

See p. 34.

Rood, Modern Chromatics, p. 293. Rood's system of complementary pairs defines colours more precisely than Blanc's simple juxtapositions of blue/orange, red/green, yellow/violet. Rood poses the following complementary pairs: yellow/ultramarine blue; orange-yellow/blue; orange/cyan blue; red/green-blue; purple/green; violet/green-yellow. See the colour wheels p. 164, and p. 214 of Rood's, Modern Chromatics.

Rood, Modern Chromatics, p. 292, also points out that blue/yellow-orange and violet/green-yellow contrasts were frequently used in art.

ibid., p. 295.

ibid.

See letter B 8, (c. 1 July, 1888) quoted p. 69.


Letter 507, (c. 7 July, 1888): "...souvent je pense à cet excellent peinture Monticelli... lorsque je me vois revenir moi-même d'un travail mental pour équilibrer les 6 couleurs essentielles, rouge-bleu-jaune-orange-lilas-vert."

In using the word "balance" to describe the relationship between two complementary colours, it is interesting to note that Rood, Modern Chromatics, p. 218, fig. 97, explains complementary colours by means of a diagram of a mechanical balance. On this balance, red and green are shown as weighing the same and therefore able to keep the balance in equilibrium.
Letter 517, (17 January, 1888) mentions the completion of three studies, and it is possible that the Self Portrait with Bangared Ear, F 529, was one of these.

See letter 566, (4 January 1889). Letters written through the following months document Vincents' continuing struggle against mental breakdown.

See letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), quoted p. 76.

See letter 501, (c. 29 June, 1888), quoted p. 76

See pp. 75-6.

See pp. 67-71.

Letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888), quoted p. 69.

See p. 77.

Letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888) quoted p. 81.

Vincent painted two portraits of Patience Escalier, F 433, and F 444. The first portrait is announced in letter 520, (11 August, 1888): "Sous peu tu vas faire connaissance avec le sieur Patience Escalier.... Aujourd'hui même je t'envoie le dessin que j'ai faite d'après cette peinture..." Vincent describes this subject as follows: "dans le portrait de paysan .... en supposant l'homme terrible que j'avais à faire en pleine fournaise de la moisson, en plein midi. De la des orangés fulgurants comme du fer rougi, de la des tons vieil'or lumineux dans les tenebras. "The second portrait of Patience Escalier is referred to in letter 528, (c. 26 August, 1888): "maintenant, j'ai cette semaine encore une fois le vieux paysan,"and in letter 529, (c. 29 August, 1888): "j'ai deux modèles cette semaine: une Arlesienne et le vieux paysan, que cette fois-ci je fais contre un fond orangé vif, qui quoiqu'il m'ait pas la prétention de représenter le trompe l'oeil d'un couchant rouge, en est peut-être
tout de même une suggestion. " These descriptions allow the two portraits of Patience Escalier to be identified as follows: The portrait *Patience Escalier*, F. 444, which depicts the peasant against a solid orange background corresponds to the canvas announced in letter 528 (c. 26 August, 1888). This leaves the portrait *Patience Escalier*, F. 443, as the canvas that is described and announced in letter 520 (11 August, 1888).

269 See letter 410, (c. 1 June, 1885) in which Vincent defends the *Potato Eaters*, F. 82, with its dark colour scheme, and exaggerated figures, against the criticisms of the dealer Portier apparently relayed to Vincent by Theo. See also letters 402, (last week of April, 1885), 405, (beginning of May, 1885), 409, (c. 15 May, 1885).

270 For example, in letter B 15, (c. 18 August, 1888), Vincent writes that he thinks Bernard and Gauguin will like his Portrait of Patience Escalier F. 444. "Vous autres, vous savez ce que c'est un paysan, combien cela sent le fauve lorsqu'on trouve quelqu'un de race."

271 See pp. 73-4

272 In letter W 7 (9 and 16 September, 1888), Vincent also emphasizes that his theories of complementary colours stem from his period in Holland.

273 See Portrait of Eugene Boch, *The Poet*, F. 462, and letters 531, (3 September, 1888), and W 7 , (9 and 16 September 1888).

274 This concept is discussed pp. 72-4.

275 Vincent implies the relation between *The Sower*, F. 422, and the portrait of *Patience Escalier*, F. 443 in letter 522, (c. 13 August 1888) when he writes: "Je crois que le tableau de la tête de vieux paysan est aussi étrange de couleur que le'semeur!..."
276 See Letter B 6, (c. 24 June, 1888), and p. 64, and n. 224.

277 See pp. 72-4.

277 A similar argument can be made for the portrait of Patience Escalier, F.444, where an intense orange background contrasts with the blue jacket of the peasant.

278 Vincent also refers to the benefits of a quiet working place in letters 481, (3 or 4 May, 1888), and 484, (c. 7 May, 1888).

279 At the time that Vincent rented the Yellow House, he was aware that Bernard had just acquired a whole house in Brittainy. See letter 480, (1 May, 1888). Vincent's rental of the Yellow House may have been inspired in part by Bernard's situation.

280 See pp. 1-2, for an outline of Vincent's plan to have Gauguin come to Arles.

281 Vincent believed that artists working together would be able to effect a dynamic and productive interchange of ideas. In letter B 6, (c. 24 June, 1888) Vincent explains to Bernard that great art is beyond, "la puissance d'un individu isolé; ils seront donc créés probablement par des groupes d'hommes se combinant pour exécuter une idée commune." Vincent then explained that one artist may know how to use colour, but may lack ideas, and that an, "esprit de corps," among artists would alleviate individual weaknesses. In letter B 9, (c. 2 July, 1888) Vincent remarks: "Ah! si plusieurs peintres étaient d'accord pour collaborer à de grandes choses!" Bernard clearly misunderstood Vincent's meaning in these letters as in letter B 11, (c. 24 July, 1888), Vincent responds: "Mon cher copain Bernard, par collaboration, je n'ai pas voulu dire que selon moi deux ou plusieurs peintres devraient travailler aux mêmes tableaux. J'ai plutôt voulu entendre par là des œuvres divergentes, mais qui se tiennent et se complètent."
In letter 498, (c. 15 or 16 June, 1888) this plan of a common sharing of profits and losses is referred to again and Vincent at this time indicates that such a venture was discussed while he was in Paris, "avec Pissarro et les autres." Vincent again affirms his enthusiasm for a society of artists in letter 538, (18 September, 1888): "Par principe, en théorie, je suis pour une association d'artistes se sauvegardant la vie et le travail...." It is worth noting that the formation in 1884 of la Société des Artistes Indépendantes had been an effort to create a cooperative society that would provide an alternative to the market control held by private dealers. For a brief discussion of this aspect of the Indépendants, see Sven Loevgren, *Modernism*, pp. 54-5.

See letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), and p. 2. A legacy received by Theo from his uncle, which Theo committed to the support of Gauguin and Vincent, was an additional spur to Vincents' enthusiasm. See letter 523, (c. 18 August, 1888).

In letter 532, (4 September, 1888) Vincent writes of the Yellow House: "II ya toujours des artistes passages ici, désireux d'échapper aux rigueurs du Nord. Et je sens moi je serai toujours de ce mombre." In letter 538, (18 September, 1888) Vincent notes that his work on the studio will affect painters of the future. See also the postscript to letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888). This aspect of the Yellow House is discussed pp. 91-5.

In letter 534, (9 September, 1888), Vincent responds to an apparent remark of Theo's concerning an exhibition of some of Vincents' work at the Revue Indépendante, by stating that if such an exhibit were to take place, he would also wish to reserve a second exhibit comprised of the canvases for the decoration of the Yellow House. "Alors seulement il leur dire, que j'aimerais à me réserver une deuxième exposition après cette première, d'études proprement dites. Alors l'année prochaine je leur donnerais à exposer la décoration de la maison, lorsqu'il y aurait un ensemble." In letters 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), and 548, (9 October, 1888), Vincent again indicates that he hopes the canvases he is currently working on (in letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), "la série d'études Décoration," are identified as the canvases to which he is referring), will be completed and ready to exhibit in 1889. In letters 543, (c. 28 September, 1888), and 548, (9 October, 1888), Vincent indicates that he wishes to have
the canvases ready by the time of the 1889 exposition. The reference here is probably to the annual exhibition of the Société des Artistes Indépendantes. Vincent seems to have been eager to have the decoration studies ready by this time because, as he explains in letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), he wishes to hold his own with artists such as Seurat, Gauguin, Guillaumin and others whom he describes as making, "un grand effort," for the year 1889.

286 See n. 4.

287 See letter 491 (27 May, 1888).

288 Letter 540 (c. 22 September, 1888): "Il me faudra du temps, mais j'ai l'idée fixe de faire pour la maison une décoration, qui vaudra l'argent que j'ai dépensé dans les années dans lesquelles je n'ai pas produit."

289 Letter 548, (9 October, 1888): "Je tiendrai cela ferme, lors que cette décoration à laquelle je travaille soit finie, il faut qu'elle vaille dix mille; que cela me soit commode ou pas, c'est mon but ferme et fixe, nous avons dépensé de l'argent et il faut qu'il nous revienne."

290 In letter 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888) Vincent outlines a plan whereby Seurat, Gauguin and Vincent himself would each contribute canvases to a total of 10,000 francs. Vincent follows these remarks by stating: "Cela tombe encore une fois juste d'aplomb avec ce que je te disais que je voulais absolument faire pour la maison 10 mille francs de peinture."

291 It should be pointed out here that while Vincent was for an association of painters that would be able to support each other, he was against a rigid organization or brotherhood of artists. He writes to Bernard in letter B 18, (c. 29 September, 1888), "L'idée de faire une sorte de Franc-Magonnerie des peintres ne me plait pas énormément. Je méprise profondément les règlements, les institutions, etc., enfin je cherche autre chose que les dogmes qui, bien loin de régler les choses, me font que causer des disputes san fin."
In letter 590, (3 May, 1889), Vincent writes, that he does not regret studying, "cette question des théories de couleur," and adds that all artists are links in a chain of evolution. "On n'est comme artiste qu' une anneau dans une chaîne...." See also letter B 19a, (beginning of November, 1888) quoted in n. 349a.

See pp. 48-50.

See letter 503, (c. 6 July, 1888) in which Vincent discusses Delacroix's colour that, "parle un langage symbolique par la couleur même." Vincent then adds that while theoretically he should be able to paint a sower using "un contraste simultané de jaune et de violet," in attempting this use of colour, "on tombe en pleine métaphysique de couleurs à la Monticelli, gâchis d'ou sortir à son honneur est bougrement incommode." Vincent affirms that he considers both Delacroix and Monticelli as precursors in the realm of suggestive colour in letter 539, (18 September, 1888), quoted pp. 8-9, and pp. 123-4. Vincent believed that Monticelli was aware of Delacroix's colour secrets. See n. 199.


See p. 92-3.

See p. 93.

See n. 295.

See pp. 5-7.

See pp. 7-9.

The passages which describe these canvases are quoted pp. 2-3.

In letter 527, (c. 22 August, 1888), Vincent describes the background of this composition as yellow ("jaune"). In 528, (c. 26 August, 1888) the background is described as greenish-yellow ("jaune vert"). The background is in fact composed of a pale yellow with small touches of green pigment evident in the impasto. The overall effect however is of yellow, which is how Vincent describes the canvas to Wil in W 8, (c. 26 August, 1888).
303 This statement was made at a time when Vincent planned to use two other sunflower canvases described in 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), as part of the decoration. These, Vase with three Sunflowers, F. 453, and Vase with Five Sunflowers, F. 459, also emphasize blue and yellow contrasts. See Vincent's description of each in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888), quoted p. 2.

As pointed out in n. 12, Vincent compares this canvas in letters 527, (c. 22 August, 1888) and 528, (c. 26 August, 1888), to a still life of, "coigns et citrons," more than likely a reference to a yellow and orange still life of pears and lemons, F. 383 or to a still life of lemons against a yellow background, F. 384. In both, Vincent had used a variant of the detailed brushwork derived from his contact with neoimpressionism, which no doubt accounts for his description of Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers, F. 454, as painted, "avec plus de simplicité," than the still life.

304 This passage is quoted pp. 84-5.

305 The relevant passages of this letter are quoted pp. 93-4.

306 In letter 552, (13 October, 1888), while describing the canvas of the Tarascon Dilligence, F. 478a, Vincent notes: "Les voitures sont peintes à la Monticelli avec des empâtements."

307 See letter 542, (25 or 26 September, 1888), quoted p. 95.

308 Pink Peach Tree in Blossom: Souvenir de Mauve, F. 394.

309 See pp. 91-5.


311 This canvas is also described in letter W 7, (9 and 16 September, 1888).

312 Vincent only moves into the Yellow House in mid September. See letter 537, (16 or 17 September, 1888), and letter 538, (18 September, 1888).
This canvas is discussed within the context of Vincents' use complementary colour admixtures pp. 24-8.

See pp. 84-5.

In this letter Vincent also refers to the expressive use of colour by Delacroix. See n. 237.

See the discussion of The Sower, F. 422, The Zouave, F. 423, The Bridge at Trinquetaille, F. 426, and The Portrait of Patience Escalier, F. 444, in Chapter IV.

See pp. 76-7.

In letter 518, (6 August, 1888) in which Vincent first outlines the plan for this canvas to Theo, this term is used to describe the café inhabitants. As well, in letter B 19, (c. 7 October, 1888) Vincent explained to Bernard, "mon café de nuit n'est pas un bordel; c'est un café où les rôdeurs de nuit cessent d'etre des rôdeurs de nuit, puisque, avachis sur les tables, ils passent la toute la nuit sans rôder du tout."

See letter 534, (9 September, 1888), quoted p. 107.


See n. 312.

In the days following the announcement of the park garden, F. 468 in letter 537, (16 or 17 September, 1888), Vincent paints two other size 30 canvases of park scenes. In letter 538, (18 September, 1888), Vincent notes that he is at work or "une autre toile de 30 carrée en train, de nouveau un jardin ou plutôt une promenade sous des platânes, avec de gazon vert et des buissons noirs de sapins." In letter 539, (18 September, 1888), Vincent notes that he has finished another canvas of a garden in the sunshine, "un jardin naturellement vert, est peint sans vert proprement dit, rien qu'avec du bleu de Prusse et du jaune de chrome." (In the English edition of the Complete Letters this sentence incorrectly reads: "...a garden, green of course, is painted with pure green...") Dr. Jan Hulsker, in "The Poets Garden,"


324 The "Editors Comments" to F.468, in de la Faille, The Complete Works notes that F. 1465 was included in this letter.

325 See letter 553 b,(4 October, 1888) to Bock quoted p. 113.

326 See letter 541 (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888) quoted pp. 112-13, and letter 553b (4 October, 1888) quoted p. 113.


328 In letter 544,(c. 29 September 1888), Vincent remarks that he had insisted that this self portrait be painted. In G 9,(September 1888) Gauguin refers briefly to the plan to paint a portrait for Vincent, and promises to paint this work soon.

329 This description parallels that to Schuffenecker. In Paul Gauguin, Lettres à sa femme et à ses amis, ed. by Maurice Malingue, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1946, letter LXXI, Gauguin writes, "C'est...absolument incomprehensible (par exemple) tellement il est abstrait." He adds, "Tête de bandit au premier abord, un Jean val Jean (les Miserables) personifant aussi un peintre impressioniste déconsidère et portant toujours une chaine pour la monde. Le dessin en est tout à fait spécial, abstraction complete... La couleur est une couleur loin de la nature...L'impressioniste est en pur non souillé encore par le baisser putride des Beaux Arts." Gauguins letters cited by Roman numeral in the remainder of this thesis will refer to the Malingue edition cited above.
It seems significant that this image of the artist as criminal coincides with Vincent's own image of Gauguin and himself as forced to live like madmen and criminals, "des fous ou des malsfaiteurs", presented in letter 521, (12 August, 1888), quoted p. 109. Gauguin may have been familiar with Vincent's concept of the artist as outcast and criminal (see pp. 108-9), possibly via a now lost letter, or, Vincent's image may have been originally derived from Gauguin. The artist as outcast or criminal may also have been a fairly common metaphor at this time.

Letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888): "Ci-inclus une bien remarquable lettre de Gauguin, que je te prierai de mettre à part comme ayant une importance hors ligne. Je parle de sa description de soi, qui me touche jusqu'an fond des fonds."

Vincent explains in this letter that a self portrait by Bernard was also received in this shipment.


In letters G 8, (September, 1888) and G 9,(September, 1888) Gauguin refers to his boredom and to a period of illness.

Letter 545, (7 October, 1888): "Ce que le portrait de Gauguin me dit surtout c'est qu'il ne doit continuer comme cela, il doit se consoler..."

Thus Vincent writes in letter 545, (7 October, 1888): "Je sens clairement que le devoir m'est imposé de faire tout mon possible pour diminuer notre pauvreté... Alors je crois notre devoir à toi comme à moi de désirer la richesse relative, justement parceque nous aurons de forts grands artistes à nourrir." In letter 546, (8 October, 1888) Vincent writes, "...je n'aime pas ces atrocités de 'l'oeuvre' .... Notre chemin c'est de ne pas les endurer pour nous, ni les faire endurer aux autres, au contraire ce chemin."

In letter 545, (7 October, 1888) Vincent observes that Gauguin looks ill and tormented in his portrait, but promises Theo: "Attends, cela ne durera pas et ce sera très curieux de comparer ce portrait-ci à celui qu'il refera de soi dans un demi-an." In letter 546, (8 October, 1888) Vincent writes,
"Ne crois pas que j'exagère pour le portrait Gauguin, ni pour Gauguin lui-même. Il doit manger, se promener avec moi dans une belle nature, tirer une fois ou deux son coup, voir la maison comme elle est et comme nous la ferons, et enfin se distraire sérieusement."

In letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), written following Vincents' receipt of letter G 9, (September, 1888), in which Gauguin had described his self portrait, Vincent explained to Theo, "je veux que Gauguin ait sa paix et tranquillité pour produire et respirer en artiste bien libéré. Si je regagne mon argent dépensé déjà et que tu m'as prêté depuis des années, nous agrandirons la chose et nous chercherons à fonder un atelier de renaissance et non de décadence."

This letter is number 544a in the English edition, the Complete Letters.

See p. 116.

Letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888): "Ce matin, j'ai reçu votre excellente lettre, que j'ai derechef envoyée à mon frère; votre conception de l'impressioniste en général dont votre portrait est un symbol est saisissante. Je suis on ne peut plus intrigué de voir cela...."

Letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888): "Je dois vous dire que meme pendant le travail je ne cesse de songer à cette entreprise de fonder un atelier ayant vous-même et moi pour habitants fixes, mais dont nous désirerons tous les deux faire un abri et un asile pour les copains aux moments où ils se trouveront acculés dans leur lutte."

Letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888): "Or je désirerais vous faire une part fort large de cette croyance que nous allons relativement réussir à fonder une chose de durée."

Letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888): "Je crois que si dès maintenant vous commenciez à vous sentir le chef de cet atelier, dont nous chercherons à faire un abri pour plusieurs...je crois qu'alors vous vous sentirez relativement consolé des malheurs présents de gene et de maladie, en considérant que probablement nous donnons nos vies pour une génération de peintres qui durera encore longtemps."
In letter 508, (12 July, 1888) Vincent describes, "un motif nouveau, un coin de jardin avec des buissons en boule et un arbre pleurer, et dans le fond des touffes de lauriers roses. Et le gazon qu'on vient de faucher avec les longues trainées de fois qui sèche au soleil..." A letter sketch of this scene corresponds to the canvas Sunny Lawn in a Public Park, F. 428, and a pen sketch F. 1450. Vincent must have sent the canvas to Theo, for in letter 537, (16 or 17 September, 1888), that describes the park garden F. 468, Vincent notes that his subject is, "le même coin de jardin, dont tu as déjà une étude dans le dernier envoi." In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), Vincent notes that the pendant park garden represented by F. 1465 is familiar to Theo as he already has a study of this garden. In letter B 18, (c. 29 September, 1888), in describing his recent canvases for the decoration of his house Vincent lists two canvases of the Poets' Garden, explaining "...dans les croquis tu en as la première idée d'après une étude peint, plus petite, qui est déjà chez mon frère." The sketch Vincent is referring to is possibly F. 1450, and was probably sent to Bernard with eight other sketches after painted studies that Vincent notes he has just mailed in letter B 11, (. 24 July, 1888). See also Hulsher, "The Poets' Garden", p. 22.


See letter 539, (18 September, 1888), and letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), quoted p. 115.

This phrase is from letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888) to Theo.

See pp. 117-18, and n. 342, n. 343, and n. 344.

In letter B 19a, (beginning of November, 1888), written after Gauguin had joined Vincent in Arles, Vincent explains that he believes in a future renaissance in art, adding that the present generation of artists are acting only as intermediaries to this end, and that future artists will be able to live in greater peace. Or moi qui ai un préssentiment d'un nouveau monde qui crois certes à la possibilite d'une immense renaissance de l'art....Il me semble, que nous-mêmes ne servont que d'intermédiare. Et que ce ne sera qu'une génération suivante qui réussira à vivre en paix."

See p. 111, and p. 113.
Letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888): "Mais plus que Gauguin sent que qu'en se mettant avec nous, il aura une position de chef d'atelier, plus vite sera-t-il gueri, il aura d'ardeur au travail. Or plus l'atelier soit complet et solidement etabli...plus les idees lui viendront et l'ambition pour le rendre bien vivant." In letter 514, (29 July, 1888), Vincent indicated that it was necessary to his own work to believe in a coming rebirth in art, as in this way art could be seen as a living force.

See p. 111.

See n. 2.

Vision après le Sermon, WS. 245.

Letter G 9, (September, 1888): "Pour moi dans ce tableau le paysage et la lutte n'existent que dans l'imagination des gens en prière par suite du sermon c'est pourquoi il y a contraste entre les gens nature et la lutte dans son paysage non nature et disproportionnée." Bernard no doubt played a major role in transmitting the aesthetics formulated at Pont-Aven to Vincent. Indeed Vincent's letter B 19, (c. 7 October, 1888), that responds to a letter of Bernard's sent with Gauguin's Self Portrait: Les Miserables, and Bernard's Self Portrait - see letter 544, (c. 29 September, 1888), to Theo, indicates that Bernard had discussed the question of drawing and composing from the imagination and from memory with Vincent. Vincent replies that he himself cannot work without a model or abstract from nature. He adds: "D'autres peuvent avoir pour les études abstraites plus de lucidité que moi, et certes tu pourrais être du nombre, ainsi que Gauguin...."

The significance of the two Poet's Garden canvases, as a response to Gauguin's abstract symbolism in the Self Portrait: Les Misérables is overlooked in studies of the Vincent/Gauguin relationship. Loevgren, Modernism, p. 172, cites The Bedroom, F. 482, as Vincent's reply to the Pont-Aven doctrines. Roskill, The Impressionist Circle, pp. 129-30, sees Vincent's Self Portrait as a Japanese Bonze, F. 476, and Portrait of Milliet F. 473, with the lieutenant's insignia forming the "symbolic" background of the canvas, as the response to Gauguin's symbolism. Of these canvases, only the Self Portrait as a Japanese Bonze, F. 476, which Vincent planned to send to Gauguin as an exchange for the Self Portrait: Les Misérables - see letter 545 (7 October, 1888) - stands as a
deliberately formulated alternative to Gauguin's pessimistic portrayal of an impressionist artist. In letter 545, (7 October, 1888), Vincent explains to his brother that his portrait is to represent, "en général un impressioniste", in the guise of, "un bonze, simple adorateur du Bouddha eternal", thereby stressing an image of serenity and peace as an alternative to Gauguin's despair presented in the Self Portrait: Les Misérables.

356 See p. 115.

357 See letter W 9, (c. 2 December, 1888) and letter G8, (September, 1888), quoted pp. 124-25.

358 See p. 112

359 See p. 115.

360 See pp. 92-93.

361 See p. 114.

362 See letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), quoted p. 114.

363 See letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888).

364 See letter 547, (8 October, 1888), and 552, (13 October, 1888).

365 In letter 553b, (4 October, 1888), to Boch, Vincent emphasizes that this canvas is, "un paysage avec rien que les mottes de terres...."

366 In letter 553b, (4 October, 1888), to Boch, Vincent describes this canvas briefly and also makes reference to the sabot-like colour of the lumps of earth: "Puis de terres labourées; un paysage avec rien que lse mottes de terre, les sillons couleur d'un vieux sabot sous le ciel myosotis avec des floçons blancs."

367 See pp. 23-8.

See the discussion of the Night Café, F. 463, pp. 104-11, and Vincent's letter 531, (3 September, 1888), quoted p. 106, and p. 125.


In letter 541, (c. 23 or 24 September, 1888), Vincent is probably referring to The Furrows, F. 574, when he writes: "Les études actuelles sont réellement d'une seule coulée de pâte. La touche n'est pas divisée beaucoup et les tous sont souvent rompus...."

See letter 531, (3 September, 1888), quoted p. 106, and p. 125.

Letter 474, (9 April, 1888): "Il me faut aussi une nuit étoilée avec du cyprès ou peut-être, au-dessus d'un champ de blé mur...." Letter B 3, (9 April, 1888): "Un ciel étoilé, par exemple, tiens, c'est une chose que je voudrais essayer à faire...." Letter B 7, (c. 28 June, 1888): "Mais quand donc ferai-je le ciel étoilé, ce tableau qui toujours me préoccupe." Letter W 7, (9 and 16 September, 1888): "Je veux maintenant absolument peindre un ciel étoilé. Souvent il me semble que la nuit est encore plus richement colorées des violets, des bleus et des verts les plus intenses."

Quoted in n. 373.

See p. 104.

Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, ed. by Emory Holloways, New York: International Collectors Library, 1926, pp. 220-221. Loevgren, Modernism, p. 179 links the Starry Night, F. 474, to Whitman's poetry, but this association is used to underline the symbolic attributes of Vincent's Starry Night, F. 612, painted in June of 1889.

ibid., pp. 219-220.

ibid., pp. 367-377.

ibid., p. 405.

See letter W 8, (c. 26 August), quoted pp. 137-38.
381 See pp. 132-33.

382 Letter 553a, (c. 29 September, 1888): "...je suis aux prises avec un paysage à ciel bleu au-dessus d'une immense vigne verte, pourpre, jaune, à sarments noirs et orangés. Des figurines de dames à ombrelles rouges, des figurines de vendangeurs avec leur charette l'égayent encore. Avant-plan de sable gris. Toujours toile de 30 carrée pour la décoration de la maison."

383 In letter 550, (9 or 10 October, 1888), Vincent remarks upon the heavy weight of the grape vines: "Si tu voyais les vignes! il y a des grappes d'un kilo même, le raisin est magnifique cette année, par les beaux jours de l'automne venant à la fin d'un été qui laissait beaucoup à désirer."

384 See the description of the canvas, represented by F. 1465, p. 115.

385 See pp. 124-25.

386 See Chapter V.

387 In letter 480, (1 May, 1880), which first describes the Yellow House, Vincent promises Theo a better sketch of the house than that included in the letter. In letter 534, (9 September, 1888), Vincent promises Theo a, "tableau de la petite maison même en pleine soleil, ou bien avec la fenêtre éclairée et le ciel étoilé."

388 See Chapter V.


390 Inspired by the fact, as Vincent explains in this letter, that neither Gauguin nor Bernard had written from Pont-Aven since Vincent's receipt of what was probably letter G 6, (August, 1888) (The receipt of this letter appears to be discussed in letter 526, (c. 21 August, 1888): See the end of n. 2.).

391 See letters 533, (8 September, 1888), and pp. 106-07.
392 See letter 533, (8 September, 1888), quoted p. 106.

393 See letter 534, (9 September, 1888), quoted p. 107.


397 See letter 406, (4 or 5 May, 1885), quoted in n. 99, and letter W 4, (c. 24-28 June, 1888), quoted in n. 178.


399 See letters 467, (c. 4-10 March, 1888), 469, (c. 17 March, 1888), and 490, (26 May, 1888).

400 See p. 53.

401 See p. 53.

402 See letter 531, (3 September, 1888), cited pp. 153-54.

403 This canvas is discussed more fully pp. 173-80.

404 See pp. 106-07.

405 Letter 554, (16 October, 1888).

406 See pp. 111-112.

Hulsker, "The Poets Garden," p. 25, points out that transcriptions of this letter in French incorrectly read: "Le dernier tableau est peint dans vert....." instead of "sans vert." The English translation in the Complete Letters, repeats this error.

ibid., p. 25. Hulsker argues that de la Faille, The Complete Works, "Editors' Comments" to F. 471, erroneously links F. 471 to the park garden painted without green, described in letter 539, (18 September, 1888).


I have not been able to study either the original or a colour reproduction of this work.

In letter 549, (9 or 10 October, 1888), Vincent discusses a chest of drawers that he has just purchased: "Je t'avais dit dans ma liste d'achats necessaires 35 francs pour la commode table à toilette, bon, je viens d'en acheter une a 14 francs et de la payer naturellement. Renvoie-moi ces 14 francs par mandat, je t'en prie." In letter 550, (9 or 10 October, 1888), Vincent defends this purchase indicating that he has bought the chest of drawers on this same day: "Ainsi j'ai presque un remords d'avoir aujourd'hui achete ce meuble...parce que j'ai du te demander de m'envoyer de l'argent plus tôt que sans cela."

The sunflower canvas Vase with Fourteen Flowers, F. 454, is in a similar fashion discussed in both letters 527, (c. 22 August, 1888) and 528, (c. 26 August, 1888), in a way that suggests that two canvases have been painted in this short time.

These canvases are Cedar Walk, F. 470; Entrance to the Public Garden, F. 566; which are linked to letters 538, (18 September, 1888), and 539, (18 September, 1888), respectively. (See pp. 156-57). Two Poet's Garden canvases are described in letters 537, (16 or 17 September, 1888), and 541, (c. 23 and 24 September, 1888); only one, F. 468, still exists; the drawing F. 1465 represents the canvas described in letter 541, (c. 23 and 24 September, 1888). (See pp. ), the Public Garden, F. 472, suggests itself as the garden described in letters 549, (9 or 10 October, 1888), and 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888). (See pp. 158-60). A park walk with two lovers, F. 479, is described in letter 552, (13 October, 1888), and may be identified by a letter sketch. This canvas is identified...
in Hulsker, "The Poet's Garden," p. 31, as belonging to the Poet's Garden series for Gauguin's room. This identification may be made as in as late as letter B 19, (c. 7 October, 1888), Vincent lists only two Poet's Garden canvases as part of his decoration. Between letter B 19, (c. 7 October, 1888) and letter 552, (13 October, 1888) when three Poet's Garden canvases are described, only two park or garden canvases are described: the garden referred to in letter 549, (9 or 10 October, 1888), and described in letter 551, (10 or 11 October, 1888) is titled by Vincent "Jardin d'automn". The garden with lovers, F. 479, described in letter 552, (13 October, 1888), then, must be the third of the Poet's Garden canvases that are listed in this letter. While there is a possibility that the size 30 canvas described in letter 549, (9 or 10 October, 1888) was a separate canvas, now lost, and was the third Poet's Garden, the similarity between the garden and lovers, F. 479, and the fourth Poet's Garden which is described and accompanied by a letter sketch in letter 556, (21 or 22 October, 1888), allows it to be firmly identified with F. 485, a canvas of two lovers in a park at night, further suggests that F. 479 was intended as the third Poet's Garden canvas. (See pp. 165-73, for a discussion of F. 479 and F. 485.)

415 See n. 414.

416 As two of the three canvases - The Cedar Walk, F. 470, and The Entrance to the Garden, F. 566 are described in letter 539, (18 September 1888) as painted in the same garden in front of Vincent's house as the Poet's Garden F. 468, it seems that Vincent did not mean to imply by "l'autre jardin", another of the public gardens in the town as three such public gardens are referred to in letter 539, (18 September, 1888). The term "l'autre jardin" seems intended to distinguish these park garden subjects from the Poet's Garden canvases.

417 A colour description is not provided for this canvas as I have not been able to study the original or a colour reproduction of this work.

418 These canvases are discussed pp. 165-73.

419 It was pointed out above, p. 160, that it is not clear which two of these three Autumn Garden canvases were intended to be included in the decoration.

420 See also the description of The Trinquetaille Bridge F. 481, pp. 161-62.

422 See pp. 111-27.

423 See n. 414.

424 Letter 555 (17 October, 1888). This passage is quoted in full p. 169.

425 See p. 166.

426 See letter 553a (c. 29 September, 1888), quoted p. 118.

427 See pp. 92-3.


429 See pp. 93-5.

430 See pp. 94-5, p. 102, and pp. 126-27.

431 See n. 430.

432 This passage is quoted p. 94.

433 See pp. 92-3, and n. 292.

434 See Chapter V.

435 Dante's Beatrice was the guiding light of his Divine Comedy, and Petrarch was known for his love sonnets to Laura. Boccaccio devoted love sonnets to Fiammetta, and his prose work, Decameron, contains many tales of gaiety and love.

436 The fact that both Boccaccio and Monticelli died in poverty probably furthered their association for Vincent.

Letter 546, (8 October, 1888): Ne crois pas que j'exagère pour le portrait Gauguin, ni pour Gauguin lui-même. Il doit manger, se promener avec moi dans une belle nature, tirer une fois ou deux son coup... et enfin se distraire sérieusement."

Letter W 9, (c. 2 December, 1888) Vincent's theory of colour as able to convey poetry is discussed pp. 123-25.

See pp. 147-49.

See letter 428, (second half of October, 1885).

See letter 372, (beginning of June, 1884), quoted p. 19, and n. 59. Also, in letter B 6, (c. 24 June, 1888), Vincent writes, "il y ait un contraste simultané de blanc et noir agréable à l'œil tout autant que celui du bleu avec l'orangé.... Suffit que le noir et le blanc sont des couleurs aussi, car dans bien des cases, elles peuvent être considérées comme couleurs, leur contraste simultané étant aussi piquant que celui du vert et du rouge, par exemple.

See pp. 66-75.

See pp. 104-11.

It is worth noting that Blanc, in his Grammaire, p. 600, states that, "notre œil, étant fait pour la lumière blanche, à besoin de la completer quand il n'en possede qu'en partie." This argument may have been a source for Vincent's sense that all four complementary pairs would provide a balanced whole. Vincent still considered Blanc as an important source for colour theory as in letter 558a (c. 21 November, 1888), he recommends Blanc's Grammaire, and Silvestre's Artistes français with it's article on Delacroix, to the painters Meyer de Haan and Isaacson who were staying with Theo at this time. As has been pointed out in n. 69, Rudolph Arnheim in Art and Visual Perception, pp. 335-54, also argues that complementary colours demand each other in order to form a complete whole.

See n. 396.

Letter 554, (16 October, 1888).

See pp. 147-149.
This need is outlined in the discussion of The Furrows, F. 574, and The Starry Night, F. 474, pp. 129 - 141.

See letter 540, (c. 22 September, 1888), and 489, (19 May, 1888), quoted p. 92. In letter 590, (3 May, 1889) Vincent writes that the vision of himself as a link in a chain of artists offers consolation: "On n'est comme artiste qu'une anneau dans une chaîne, et qu'on trouve ou qu'on ne trouve pas de cela on peut se consoler.

See letter 543, (c. 28 September), quoted p. 132.

Letter 541, (c. 29 September, 1888): "Eh bien oui, je me le reproche, mais enfin j'ai l'amour propre de faire par mon travail une certaine impression sur Gauguin .... Sa venue me changera dans ma façon de peindre et j'y gagnerai, j'ose croire, mais toute de même, je tiens un peu à ma décoration.

Letter 558,(28 October, 1888): "Ce que pense G. de ma décoration en général je ne le sais pas encore, je sais seulement qu'il y a déjà quelques études qu'il aime réellement, ainsi le semeur, les tournesols, la chambre à coucher. Et l'ensemble je n'en sais encore rien moi-même..."(For the possibility that a sower was part of the decoration see n. 26).

See Gauguin's comments in his memoirs Avant et Après, translated by Welsh - Ovcharov, Van Gogh in Perspective, pp. 44 - 47.

In letter 528, (c. 26 August, 1888), Vincent had written that painting promises to become, "lus subtle-plus musique...-enfin elle promet la couleur." In letter 531, (3 September, 1888), he writes: "Et dans un tableau je voudrais dire quelque chose de consolant comme une musique," and adds that such effects are sought, "par la vibration de nos colorations." Vincent wrote to Wil in W 3, (30 March, 1888) that by arranging the modern palette based on bright or pure hues, one could create a harmony and calm equivalent to that achieved in Wagner's music. In letter 494,(c. 6 June, 1888), Vincent notes that he is reading, "un livre sur Wagner", adding, "quel artiste, un comme ça dans la peinture, voilà ce qui serait chic-ca viendra." In letter 542,(25 or 26 September, 1888), an article on Wagner, "l'amour dans la musique," inspires Vincent to again remark that painting must achieve a similar
expression. Vincent's concept of colour as parallel to music in its expressive power no doubt stems from the Nuenen period,(see p. 29 and n. 55). However in Paris in 1886 and 1887, Vincent would also have been able to come into contact with aesthetic theories that posed correspondances between poetry, music and art, and the expressive means of each. These theories, current with neoimpressionist artists, symbolist writers, and their circles, and publicized in the *Revue Wagnerienne*, are outlined in Loevgren, *Modernism*, pp. 82-90. Vincent's contact with such theories has not been investigated in this thesis, although such a study, conceivably, would amplify the meaning of his statements that link music and colour.

457 See p. 8.

458 Chapters III and IV outline Vincent's movement toward simplified and exaggerated colour effects. In several canvases of the summer of 1888, Vincent had used a thick impasto and the textured surface that resulted added to the vibrant quality of a single colour area. However, the use of this technique was restricted to small portions of the canvas, such as the areas of intense turquoise sky in *View with Irises in the Foreground*, F. 409, and, *The Wheatfield*, F. 411. In canvases such as *The Zouave*, F. 423, and the *Portrait of Patience Escalier*, F. 444, larger background areas were rendered in a thick impasto, and a thick impasto was also used to render the faces and torsos of the two figures.

459 See p. 132.

460 This passage is quoted p. 124. It is interesting to note that in Gauguin's reminiscences of his period with Vincent, he remarks upon Vincent's attraction to complementary colours, although he links this interest to Vincent's contact with neimpressionism. See Avant et Après, translated by Welsh-Ovcharov, in *Van Gogh in Perspective*, p. 46.

461 Letter 590, (3 May, 1889): "Je ne regrette pas d'avoir voulu savoir cette question des theories des couleur un peu techniquement." "Et ainsi nous garderons toujours une certaine passion pour l'impressionisme, mais je sens que moi je reviens de plus en plus dans des idees, que j'avais deja avant de venir a Paris."


464 See pp. 78-79.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


PLATE 6

PLATE 7
PLATE 12

PLATE 13