

**Exterior of a Restaurant at  
Asnières**

Paris, Summer 1887  
Oil on canvas, 18.5 x 27 cm  
F 342, JH 120  
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum  
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



*View of Paris from Montmartre* (p. 182), his vision of the city was of had been of an infinite sea; but now the sea had been dammed by walls, roofs and the horizon. To find the distance, our gaze must first negotiate a set of geometrical obstacles. Beyond lies the promise of freedom, the richness of Life. And in that beyond van Gogh has again abandoned pointillist technique.

"There is no single school", declared the Belgian writer Emile Verhaeren, considering the multiplicity of artistic persuasions in Paris at that time, "hardly even groups any more, since they are forever splitting up. The diverse tendencies remind me of movable geometrical patterns, as in a kaleidoscope, one moment opposed and the

**Still Life with French  
Novels and a Rose**

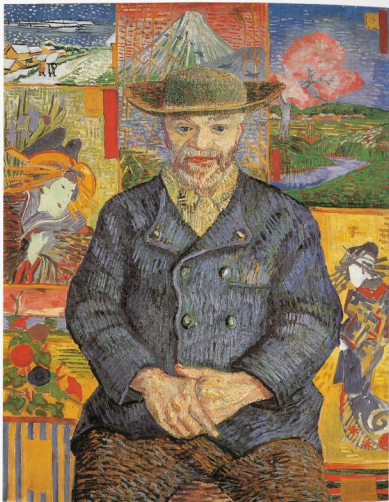
Paris, Autumn 1887  
Oil on canvas, 73 x 93 cm  
F 359, JH 1332  
Private collection



**Self-Portrait with Straw Hat**

Paris, Summer 1887  
Oil on cardboard,  
40.5 x 32.5 cm  
F 469, JH 1302  
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum  
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)





## The Far East on his Doorstep Van Gogh and Japonism

In 1891 the influential critic Roger Marx declared that Japan had been as important for modern art as classical antiquity had been for the Renaissance. Thirteen years earlier, Ernest Chesneau (in his article *Japan in Paris*) had already noted the wildfire that had been spreading throughout the studios, stores and cosmetic parlours of the city: "One was inevitably amazed at the impartiality of composition, the skill with form, the wealth of colour values, the originality of effects and at the same time the simplicity of the means used to achieve the various results." Japan meant more than the merely exotic. The Far East had conquered Europe by peaceful means, quite unlike the Occident, which was then engaged in forcibly subjugating other peoples. Japan had made its impact on 19th century culture.

In the age of the shoguns, Japan had been isolated and xenophobic. But at the 1867 Paris World Fair, Japan burst upon the scene like a bombshell, so to speak. The Japanese made skilful use of western notions of oriental mystery – and Paris gladly took object lessons from the articles that were offered. Novelty always prompts a vogue; and Japan was fashionable. Society ladies wore kimonos, placed screens in their salons, and adored the tea ceremony. In the course of time the vogue evaporated and was replaced by a profounder understanding of Japan, which involved fewer people but also implied a more sensitive acquisition of knowledge. Looking back, we can distinguish four stages in the reception: firstly Japan was a treasure chest where anyone



**Still Life with Red Cabbages and Onions**  
Paris, Autumn 1887  
Oil on canvas, 50 x 64.5 cm  
F 374, JH 1338  
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum  
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

**Portrait of Père Tanguy**  
Paris, Autumn 1887  
Oil on canvas, 92 x 75 cm  
F 363, JH 1351  
Paris, Musée Rodin

**Noon: Rest from Work**  
(after Millet)  
Saint-Rémy, January 1890  
Oil on canvas, 73 x 91 cm  
F 686, JH 188a  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

