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Vincent van Gogh – Becoming Van Gogh at Didrichsen Art Museum 5.9.2020–31.1.2021

Didrichsen Art Museum's 55th anniversary will culminate with the opening on 5 September 2020 of an exhibition of works by Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890). The heart of the exhibition comprises a selection of drawings from the early years of the artist's career that are on loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands. The exhibition also features two oil paintings: Finland's only work by Van Gogh, *Street in Auvers-sur-Oise*, 1890, which is in the collection of the Ateneum Art Museum, and *Self-Portrait*, 1887, in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum. *Becoming Van Gogh* is the most extensive collection of Van Gogh works ever seen in Finland and the first exhibition featuring solely art by Van Gogh.

A new exhibition of works in the Didrichsen collection of modern art starting on 5 September 2020 will feature what is believed to be Finland's only painting by Mark Rothko.



Vincent van Gogh: *Windmills at Dordrecht (Weeskinderendijk)*, 1881, Collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, the Netherlands. Photo: Rik Klein Gotink.

Becoming Van Gogh

The *Becoming Van Gogh* exhibition at Didrichsen Art Museum shows the early years in the career of **Vincent van Gogh** (1853–1890). The exhibition features 39 drawings and one lithograph from 1881–1886 as well as two oil paintings from 1887 and 1890. The drawings tell about Van Gogh's journey to becoming an artist, his preoccupation with drawing and his endeavours to put the world he observed onto paper. Central motifs include depictions of peasants and agricultural labour, the Dutch landscape with rural and urban scenes, as well as portrait studies. The two oil paintings featuring in the exhibition recall Van Gogh's expressive power at the height of his artistic creativity.

In the world of international art exhibitions, Van Gogh is definitely one of the most sought-after artists and his works have rarely been exhibited in Finland. “We have been working on this exhibition for several years and are now really looking forward to its opening,” says **Maria Didrichsen**, who has been Museum Director since April. “Borrowing sensitive, fragile drawings for an exhibition is a major feat since they require long storage times in the dark and so are not often on loan.”

The prevailing exceptional conditions also pose their own challenges to the exhibition. “Despite the restrictions in force, we hope that everyone who wants to will be able to see these works rarely shown in Finland,” Didrichsen adds. The museum has arrangements in place to ensure a safe visit and a pleasant experience for all concerned.

Calling of the draughtsman

Vincent van Gogh’s journey to becoming an artist was an exceptional one. The son of a pastor, he sought direction in his life having first failed as an art dealer, student and preacher. To a religious man, art seemed like an opportunity to serve God. The interest in art gained from home and his job as an art dealer turned into a burning calling that swept aside everything else and the decision that matured in the summer of 1880 triggered the start of his career as an artist, which lasted just ten years.

Van Gogh lacked the traditional training of an artist with its years of apprenticeship and academic studies. In line with his character, he began passionately and resolutely to practice drawing and then painting, using drawing manuals to help him. He had enrolled at the Académie Royal des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, where he could study and draw from plaster casts but soon dropped out. However, Van Gogh still longed for teaching and guidance to help him develop. He shunned art schools but was passionately convinced of his calling – even to the extent of unusual solutions and quarrels. Van Gogh typically learnt how to portray people by drawing live models.

For Van Gogh, drawing was essential to all image making and painting was only possible once he had mastered sovereign drawing skills. This idea was not at odds with the view of art teaching at the time. The artist, isolated and impecunious, constantly experimented with different methods of making visual art, combining them in unusual ways: he used lithographic crayon to draw on paper, continued with watercolour and printing ink and erased the colour at times almost scratching through the paper. Van Gogh called the works created in this way drawings.

Working in the Netherlands and France

The exhibition depicts Van Gogh’s life: since he had to constantly look for affordable models, views from his immediate surroundings and everyday activities naturally became themes in his works. Studies and portraits depict peasants and people in the artist’s inner circle. Van Gogh constantly changed his place of residence and the works in the exhibition interpret his living environment and views in the Netherlands and France. The works on paper are views from various cities, Etten, The Hague, Nuenen and Paris, where the artist lived.



Vincent Van Gogh: *Self portrait*, 1887. Collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, the Netherlands. Photo: Rik Klein Gotink.

Alongside Van Gogh's drawings, the exhibition at the Didrichsen Art Museum also features two oil paintings, *Self-Portrait*, 1887, from the Kröller-Müller collection, and *Street in Auvers-sur-Oise*, 1890, from the Ateneum collection. These represent the distinctive painting method that evolved as a synthesis of impressions from the artist's years in the Netherlands and his French period 1886–1890. His *Self-Portrait*, 1887, reflects the role the artist Vincent van Gogh had begun to pursue through his drawing exercises seven years earlier.

Kröller-Müller Museum

The drawings, the lithograph and self-portrait on display in the exhibition are on loan to the Didrichsen Art Museum from the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands. Like the Didrichsen Art Museum, the Kröller-Müller Museum was founded as the result of passionate collecting by private individuals. **Helene Kröller-Müller** (1869–1939) and **Anton Kröller** (1862–1941) accumulated a highly important collection of modern art in the first decades of the 1900s. Helene Kröller-Müller was among the first to recognise Vincent van Gogh's distinctive art. In 1935, she donated her collection to the state of the Netherlands and the museum was founded in 1938. The museum's collection currently includes more than 90 Van Gogh paintings and more than 180 drawings, making it the second largest collection after the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. The Kröller-Müller Museum is in the Hoge Veluwe National Park, Otterlo, some 70 km to the southeast of Amsterdam.



Didrichsen Art Museum – celebrating 55 years in 2020

In addition to the Becoming Van Gogh exhibition, Didrichsen Art Museum has curated a celebratory exhibition of works from the museum's own collection. The exhibition will be open from 5 September 2020 to 31 January 2021. September 2020 marks 55 years since the Didrichsen Art Museum was opened. **Marie-Louise** and **Gunnar Didrichsen**, who had amassed an extensive art collection, established a museum adjacent to their home in 1965. The celebratory exhibition will show many popular works, including works by **Pablo Picasso**, **Wassily Kandinsky** and **Helene Schjerfbeck**, in both downstairs exhibition rooms and in the Villa extension. The exhibition will also feature what is believed to be Finland's only painting by **Mark Rothko**.

For the media

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Photos: <https://www.didrichsenmediabank.com/> password: didrichsen2020

Exhibitions:

Vincent van Gogh – Becoming Van Gogh

Didrichsen 55 – celebratory exhibition

Extended museum opening hours:

Tue 10–18, Wed–Thu 10–20, Fri–Sun 10–18

The Sculpture Park is always open

Becoming Van Gogh – admission tickets

€16 / €14

Free admission for children under 18

Museum Card

Free admission to the Sculpture Park

Becoming Van Gogh – guided tours

Exhibition intro in English at 12 noon on the first Saturday of each month

Private tours:

Tue–Fri €90, Sat–Sun €110, max. 25 people/group

Didrichsen Art Museum

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How to get there: Buses 510 and 552, e.g. from Munkkiniemi (Munkkiniemen aukio) or Otaniemi (Aalto University metro station).

Website: www.didrichsenmuseum.fi

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