Kids @ CAM – At Home Family Projects
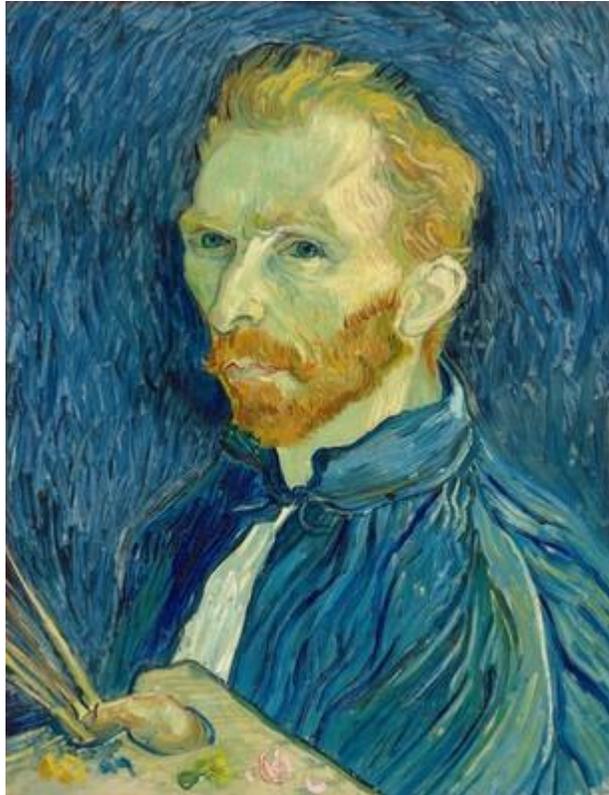
Spotlight on Art History

Vincent van Gogh

About the Artist:

"Be clearly aware of the stars and infinity on high. Then life seems almost enchanted after all."

Vincent van Gogh (1853 – 1890) was a Dutch post-impressionist painter who is among the most famous and influential figures in the history of Western art. However, when he was alive, he was not very famous at all. Largely self-taught, van Gogh produced more than 2,000 oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, and sketches, which became in demand only after his death. He also wrote many letters, especially to his brother Theo, in which he worked out his thoughts about art. After moving to Paris in 1886, he developed a style known as Post-Impressionism, a term encompassing works made by artists unified by their interest in expressing their emotional and psychological responses to the world through bold colors and expressive, often symbolic images. "This morning I saw the countryside from my window a long time before sunrise, with nothing but the morning star, which looked very big," wrote van Gogh to his brother Theo, describing his inspiration for one of his best-known paintings, *The Starry Night* (1889). The window to which he refers was in the Saint-Paul asylum in Saint-Rémy, in southern France. *The Starry Night* is based on van Gogh's direct observations as well as his imagination, memories, and emotions.

ART AT HOME – STARRY NIGHT

What You Will Need:

- Construction Paper (preferably darker colors)
- Paint (suggested colors: white, yellow, and orange)
- Paintbrushes for each color
- Paper towels
- Scissors
- Glue

Your background of stars and the moon will be created using your paints, and the foreground imagery of buildings, hills and trees will be created by gluing paper shapes on top of the dried painted background. Keep this in mind when planning out your design.

- Step 1 – Have an image of 'The Starry Night' nearby so you can use it for inspiration and reference.
- Step 2 – Begin by painting the star filled background of your artwork on dark construction paper (black or dark blue preferably). You can first paint the larger stars and moon, and then use short brush strokes to create the movement around them. You can stagger the colors in whatever way you choose. Cover the upper 2/3 of your paper, since the bottom will be covered up later.
- Step 3 – When you are done painting the upper portion of your paper, set it to the side to dry.
- Step 4 – While it is drying, cut out a variety of shapes to create buildings and hills in the foreground, using van Gogh's painting as a guide. You do not have to copy his design exactly.
- Step 5 – Cut out a shape to represent the large cypress tree.
- Step 6 – Glue the paper buildings, hills, and tree onto the foreground, making sure there is no blank space in between these and the painted portion.
- Step 7 – Place your artwork somewhere to dry completely while you clean up your workspace.

Tips:

- When creating the paths of the stars, you can choose whether you want to follow the format of Van Gogh's swirling stars, or you can experiment with concentric circles of your own design.
- If there is space between the painted background and collaged foreground, you can decide whether to add more collaging or painting to connect the spaces.

Questions to ask one another:

- Do you see movement in your stars?
- How does the darkness of the paper cut outs look against the brighter colors of the painted sky?
- What did you prefer – painting or collaging?

Follow Up Project Idea:

- Van Gogh was inspired to create 'The Starry Night' by looking out his window. Choose a window in your house and create the same project using YOUR view as the inspiration. Give it a title!