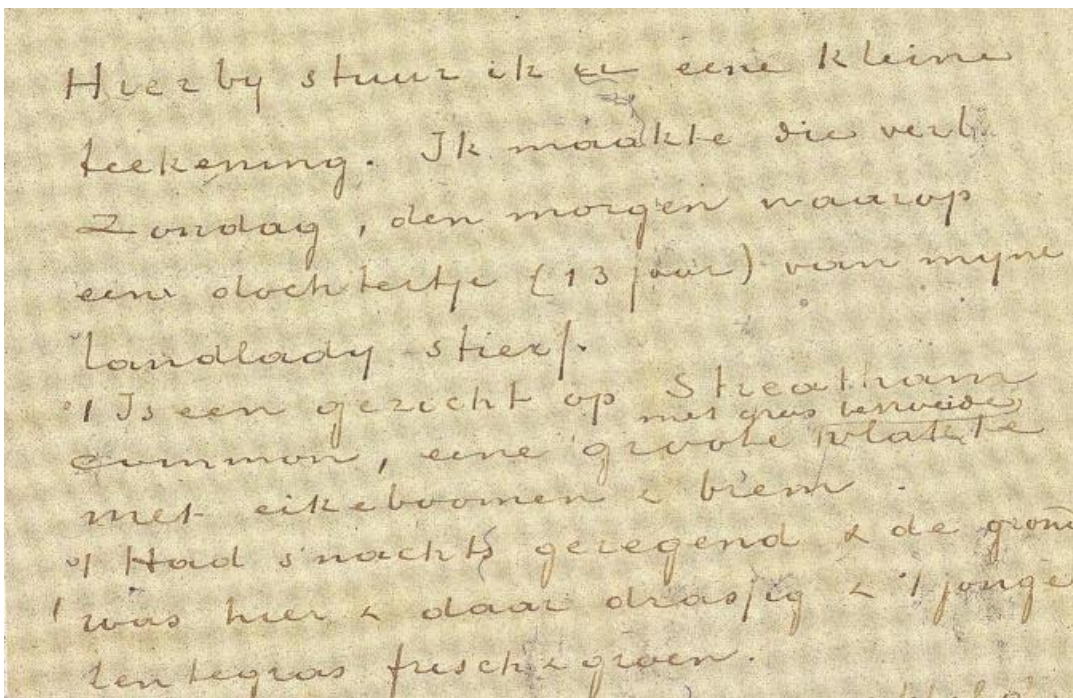


VAN GOGH'S TRUE COLOURS

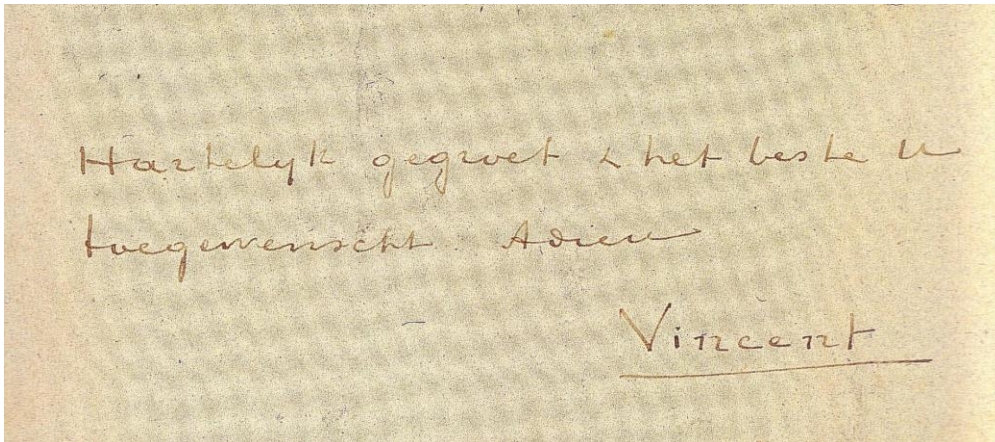
A graphologist can only analyse and interpret frozen snapshots in time. However, the following collection of samples of letters (ranging from 1875 until Vincent van Gogh's death in 1890) takes us on a journey through the latter stages of the artist's life and means we are able to piece together a personality profile in chronological order – not from the perspective of the *content* of the correspondence, but by analysing the *text* itself. In essence, each piece of handwriting is rich in revealing the character, both conscious and unconscious of the man, and bears testament to his evolution, his changing moods and behavioural patterns. As a whole jigsaw, we are able to see the real man behind the myth and set a record straight into the bargain. Was Vincent van Gogh as mad as a box of frogs or a genius and misunderstood? Was he needy or independent? Reckless, restless and unreflective? And to what degree was he influenced by society and the world around him? And does it matter?



1875

In **1875**, at 22 years of age, Vincent had already been working for a number of years in the business world for the International Art Dealer's GOUPILO – at a number of different branches. Initially he was composed, avoiding confrontation, making his head rule his heart, and intellectualising his feelings. He managed his emotions well and actually tried to control and separate out his feelings, as his method of self protection (**upright, regular and disconn, lean LZ**). He represses his natural drives and instincts and gets on with other aspects of his life (**LZ hooks or blunt LZ or low crossing LZ**). He had strong instincts, a need for security; to establish roots; a desire for possessions; pre-occupation with want; target orientated activity. There is evidence of strong unconscious; unexplained agonies (gut worries) and premonitions

Lower extensions prolonged downwards (Maslow) . He didn't want to indulge in his sensuality at this stage – he was perhaps afraid of something inside and of revealing it. He wanted to be a man of honour and didn't want to show what was inside for all the world to see (*upright, pasty, vertical emphasis, legibility, small size*). However he was a man who could suddenly be quite threatening, getting what he wanted by force and without regard to other people's wishes (*misplaced angle in capital letter, broadness with elliptical & open ovals*). A slight feeling of apathy, particularly with regards to any creative outlets, as he focuses on the practical side to his current employment – although he finds it hard to motivate himself since he appears fairly indifferent to his job (*slight monotonous feel together with a somewhat stilted appearance; t-bars crossed mid to low – lack of ambition - short and usually to right side of bar – impatience – a few t-bars beginning to be omitted.*) The *stiltedness* lacks real forward movement, *despite broadness, roundedness and rising baselines*, showing the repression that is putting the brakes on any deviation from his current path (unless it is forced upon him). He has a strong work ethic and is goal orientated, (*angles, rising, regularly spaced baselines*) He is poised on the brink (*signature placement far right of text*), curbing any natural spontaneity (*stable, very straight baselines, upright*) in favour of a much more controlled and unspontaneous one. Later on we will see that he has *rising baselines* even on lined paper, showing that he would not be tied to conventions or rules, preferring to go his own way.



1875

Evidence also emerges that he is beginning to feel he cannot trust people. He is highly selective and discriminating about who he chooses to have a relationship with, and shows reluctance to share his feelings apart from with those he decides are trustworthy in his eyes to be his friends, or who have something in common with him (*secondary width is good, clear, occ very wide throughout; narrow/ closed 'y's in LZ - social-sexual area; social d's disjointed/ short/ left tending/ vanity loops*). He values his own space, which enables him to explore and be immersed in his own thoughts and values, generally preferring to work alone and independently (*upright, strong verticality of script, disconn, dom UZ, lean LZ and short LZ strokes, wide word spacing*). His "stiff upper lip" and air of neutrality rarely revealed what was going on inside. His *signature* remains upright, disconnected, placed to the right side of page, and underlined to

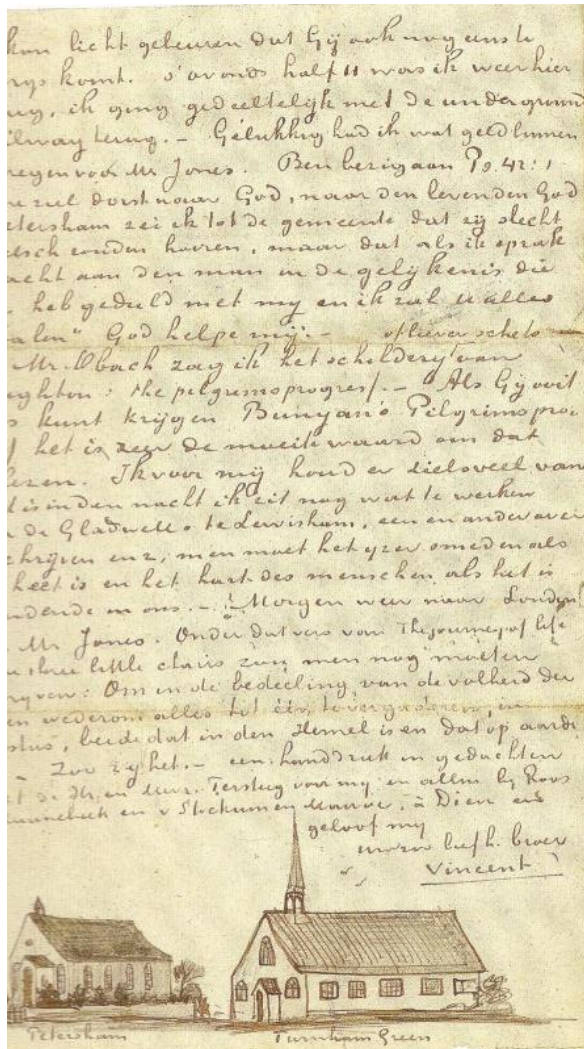
promote feelings of self worth. In fact his desire for self sufficient independence, his sensitivity and highly contemplative nature is shown throughout (*clear/ slightly wide word spacing, primary thread with predominantly angles, broad, medium/ wide secondary width, upright, medium/ fast speed, short d stems – social d - with vanity loops or left tending*)

There is conflict over life direction – van Gogh clearly sensed an underlying profound uncertainty about who he was and what he ought to be doing with his life. There is evidence that he wasn't happy with his chosen vocation (*elliptical ovals*) and not always realistic in his expectations (*capital T bar on Theo is high above stem*)

However, we see a sense of resourcefulness combined with a strong feeling that he wasn't fulfilling and achieving his potential (*Jungian sensing type, strong downstrokes, elliptical ovals, medium size with dom LZ, rising baselines, upright, regular, split letters*)

Signs of dissatisfaction are evident between the ages of 22 and 23, and as a consequence, we see a dramatic and irretrievable shift of focus in Vincent van Gogh's attitudes and values and perspective of life. A change in his character reflects his ambivalence over the future and his changing circumstances. His initial preoccupation with material possessions and comforts, including sexual needs, changes visibly to an emphasis on a much more philosophical and contemplative stance in life. We can almost witness his own ego diminishing quietly into the background, as he extricates himself from the business world and moves into anonymity – a place where his own complex mind could be explored, whilst hiding behind the safety of an enigmatic mask.

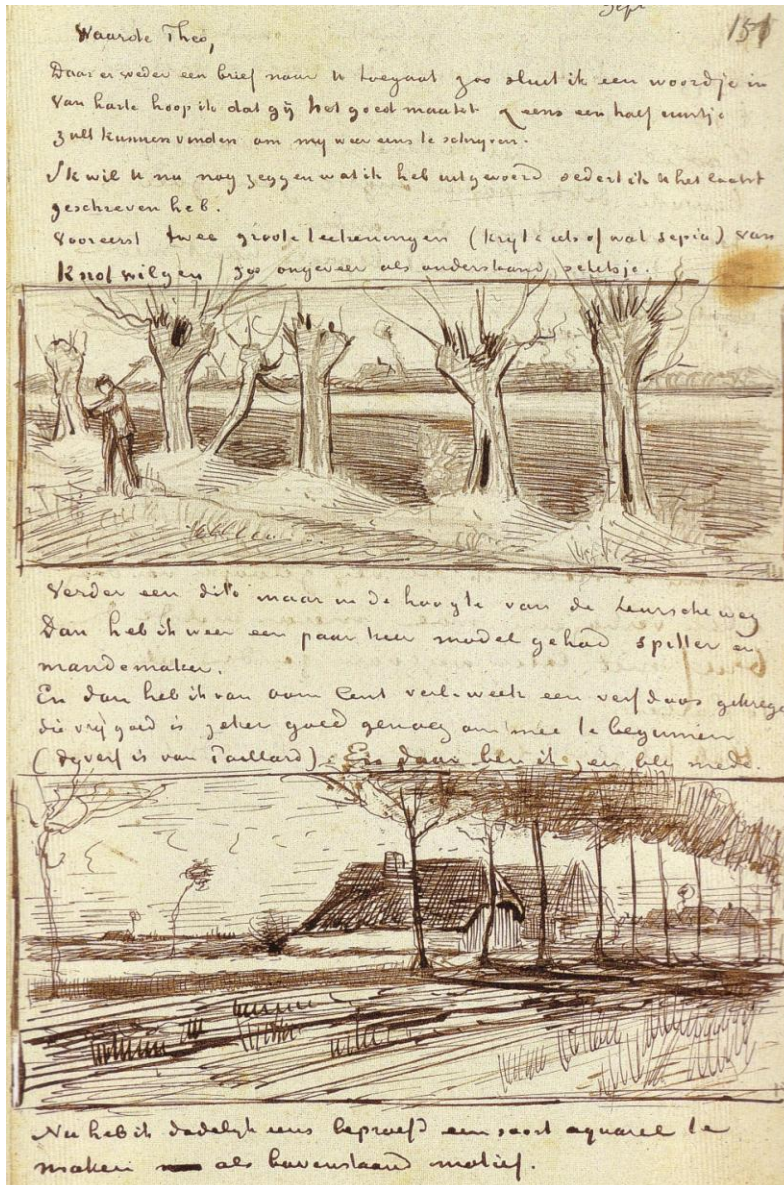
In **1876 (aged 23)** we see the *principled* individual with a strong sense of duty and some humility emerge from a chrysalis (*right slant with right tends in UZ – because he wished to impart knowledge; compact; small with dominant UZ ; horizontal emphasis.*) He begins to dabble at being a preacher and then an evangelist for the miners. We can also see his stubbornness and determination (*very small size, angles, buckle 'k's'*) and leanings to the abstract with lots of bright ideas emerging. We can almost see him trying to 'catch' ideas and vision for the future (*full UZ hooks*). He needed to be creative and express himself emotionally in terms of thoughts, ideas and imagination. He felt a necessity to communicate (*margins narrow becoming non existent, crowded text clear and legible, never tangling*) and he wanted to be 'hands on' in his venture (*very small size, dom UZ with fullness in UZ loops*) We see a change of focus, where developing ideas and achieving goals become more important and motivational to him than having security or material possessions (*good HT, fast speed, high FL, large UZ – proportionally balanced with loop and regular, some down-stroke pressure, angles*). He shows understanding and compassion towards others, but also an unpredictable nature. His reactions would have varied depending on the mood he was in at the time (*right slant varying with right tends in UZ, vanity loops*). It was the beginning of subjectivity and allowing himself to be influenced and affected by other people. He needed intense and immediate involvement (*compact layout & spacing; good clear layout with legibility, small size*). He wanted to dominate his environment and control events; to put his need for instant self-expression into creative, literary or oratory work; and as a highly principled individual, he needed to communicate his ideas with honesty (*close line spacing, irregular and close word spacing, connected*). (*Note – 'honesty' is seen in the high FL, legibility, slight right slant, signature matching text, lack of covering strokes, stable baselines, +ve regularities, roundness*).



1876

We see a dramatic change in *zonal area, size and slant*, showing a shift and growth in his concentration and focus (*small/ microscopic size with dom UZ and weak MZ; Jungian feeling type dom function*). We see how he becomes more emotional, subjective and warm, less practical and objective (*leanness to begin with – esp in LZ – becoming fuller and more expansive in UZ particularly and also in LZ; t bars are lean*). He began to be more concerned with what he was going to do **to** the world. Proactive and emotionally responsive, he had the ability to connect instinctively with other people from all walks of life (*horizontal axis dominant, broad, conn, rounded, upward end strokes, good secondary width*). He was reflective, contemplative (*strong left tending d's*), showed dedication to his work (*right slant, connected, good HT, broad, rising baselines*) and the willpower to translate ideas into action, (*fullness in UZ with short lean LZ*) which would eventually lead to an obsession. He focused, at this stage, on detail, routine and order, so much so that he got bogged down in detail, rather than seeing the whole picture, and found it difficult to think logically from an objective point of view. He could only see what was immediately right under his nose, rather than looking at things from a wider perspective. He tended to run on one track without giving consideration to anything

else and therefore made a big deal out of little things (*small size, compact line spacing, connected*). Nevertheless, he was natural, charming, loyal and personable, devoted when necessary - family was important to him (*upright, broad, simple style, small and rounded MZ, right tends, arcade, garland connecting strokes, +ve irreg, cradle LZ, signature matching text, Adler's +ve receptive type, +ve mother fixation*). He was kind, caring, gentle and generous (*rounded MZ, garlands, broad, Adler's eldest child under compensating*) modest and unassuming (*small size with weak MZ*), and yet he heard and followed his own drum beat (*lean, short t stems, mostly without bars*).



1881

Then in **1879 (aged 26)** he became an artist.

Initially, between the ages of 26 and 28, he was considered, measured, concentrating his efforts, slightly unsure of himself and poised on the brink of a spontaneous outpouring of creative inspiration and sheer hard work (*still small & stilted; mainly upright with slight mixed slant; some avoidance of right hand margin*). He was task orientated, very thorough, with an aptitude for meticulous work and also an excellent impartial observer, because his ego didn't get in the way of his judgement. (*Upright/ slight mixed slant with small size and correspondingly small MZ*). Motivation came from within. He would have tackled his work in a precise way, in order to get the job done well and to be spot on (*small/ very small size and upwards endstrokes; closely dotted l's*). He was keen to learn his trade properly and get the basics right – a detail man - more backroom than showroom – and preferring to maintain a low profile. Modest and unassuming, self-deprecating and with a tendency to underestimate his own abilities (*small size with weak MZ, signature underlined*) we can see how hard he concentrated his efforts (*clear and regular line spacing, simple style, mainly upright, stilted*). At this stage he was able to investigate and react to situations both sympathetically and logically, although he already found it hard to connect to his own emotions and preferred to remain objective and rational (*upright with broadness, part connected, disjointed letters*).

In close relationships he would have been tolerant to a point – submissive, tender, sympathetic, somewhat over protective and permissive in an indulgent way (*small size, rounded, broadness, garland connecting strokes and upwards endstrokes*). Although as a general rule, he was a natural rebel and would not be tied to conventions or rules, preferring to go his own way and portray the enigmatic character (*t bars purposefully omitted, angles at baseline, script rising above baselines even on lined paper, defiant buckle k's*). He was someone who wanted to make up his own mind and do as he pleased, however he was paradoxical because, in spite of this apparent indifference, he was still edgy about what other people thought of him, particularly pertaining to his lifestyle and in the social arena (*short d's with vanity loops*). Ironically, where other people were concerned, he was non-judgemental – open and flexible - giving him the ability to see other people's points of view. He could instinctively make immediate emotional connection with others and his kindness and inherent gentleness was in sharp contrast to the understanding afforded him by society. It was ironic that for someone who had such a firm grasp and intuition of life, people and nature, he was unable to understand and live with himself. He needed other people, but never in a selfish way. He generally gave far more than he ever received (*horizontal emphasis with conn & 1st letter disconn, roundedness, upward/ long end strokes, good clear secondary width, broadness and pastiose*).

He was able to combine his natural artistic abilities (*pasty, arcade*) with his ideas and thoughts (*fullness in UZ, aerated*) and with real feeling and sentiment (*broad, pasty, clear secondary width, upward endstrokes, Jungian feeling type*). He had the ability to temper instinct with reasoning – so what we get is inspiration followed by the objective criticism of the receptive mind, and this is followed up with bursts of painting frenziedly and obsessively (*spells of disconnectedness – particularly 1st letter disconn - interspersed with bursts of connectedness/ over conn; large UZ*).

1881

7

He preferred to work alone and independently (*upright, disconn, wide word spacing*). There was moderation or emotional restraint, and defiant obstinacy (*ink-filled ovals*) about his manner, which manifested itself either as self-sufficiency or self-control, and he would have been uncomfortable expressing his feelings, except through media – artistic expression (*upright, MZ barely fluctuating, slightly stilted, upright or right pulling LZ, small-very small, tendency to disconn, pastiness*), but it was more to do with his desire for clarity and precision than any real indifference on his part – he felt very deeply about things (*pressure unknown, although pastiness and ink-filled letters show his feelings were directed inwardly, indicating he had the growing potential to erupt violently – particularly after consuming alcohol; closely dotted l's, very small size, disconn*). He was quite passive most of the time (*rounded, regular and barely fluctuating small MZ*). Any emotional outburst – sudden temper and anger without release - (*slight mixed slant, pasty, smeary ink-filled ovals*) could have been due to an inferiority complex (*weak MZ*) perhaps stemming from being misunderstood. Since he enjoyed being enigmatic - feeling he marched to a different drum beat to most - outbursts were more likely to have occurred either as a direct result of impatience with himself (*small to very small size showing there was no ego about him – purely a need for precision and achieving excellence in his work*) or worry about practical considerations and lack of finance; or the direct result of suppression and repression (*discussed above*), or possibly even alcohol induced. Whatever the truth, we know he was capable of lavish impulsiveness (*Excessive secondary width with small MZ, broadness, pasty*)

He enjoyed and needed to discuss ideas, but equally he needed time alone to reflect and contemplate – so he would have needed to balance his time to accommodate this desire - (*wide letter spacing with wide word spacing and broadness*)

He shows good aesthetic sense. His clear and orderly thought patterns together with an intellectually discriminating mind, gave him clear objective judgement, and he was able to overcome any problems by viewing things dispassionately (*disconn, aerated*) and keeping them in perspective. To an extent he didn't allow personal feelings to cloud his judgement (*although the appearance of ink-filled letters towards the end of the script more than hint at an impatience that threatened to destroy this interpretation*). His aptitude for meticulous work and his ability to deal with precision and details developed, facilitating intuition to come into play. We see his script becoming more *rhythmic and free flowing and lively*, rather than *contrived and stilted* as it had been before.

A certain amount of guilt and anxiety would have driven him (*muddiness, well developed UZ – superego*). It could have stemmed from a number of areas... his brother Theo supporting him financially... feeling he had let his father down, or not lived up to his parents expectations, perhaps because he was sacked from GOUPIL... it could be for leaving his love interest and not standing by his woman. We do know that he would have been deeply affected by these strong feelings. Much anger was directed inwardly and with no release – apart from creatively. But, to a large extent, he was evidently holding himself back at this stage. He realised that he needed to know and learn the basics and pay attention to detail, before he could be free to let himself go.

met -
 zal brengen is nog maar een
 en - toch koop ik een paar dozen
 en later hoe langer hoe meer
 Portuſſchen is men verſt op - ik hoop hartelijk
 dat gy zelf niet in 1 maand zult
 gewone koop ik ze 10 Sept. het gewone zult kunnen
 genden - Ik moet vanmiddag nog maar
 de aardappelmarkt - door te schieden gaat niet
 van wege 1 volk - ik heb de er toch al deſtſe gema
 last van. Men moet maar averal, binnen
 in de buizen mogen loopen a zonder complimenten
 voor de raven mogen jellen. En - het is zaterdag
 en dus is er zeker wat te doen met typen van te zien
 Het beste is te liegenwacht - weet dat ik dagelijks aan
 u denk. adieu met een handdruk. 1.1
 Vincent

Sept 1882

After 1881 (29+) there is more movement, and script even smaller and compact, pastiose with smears appearing

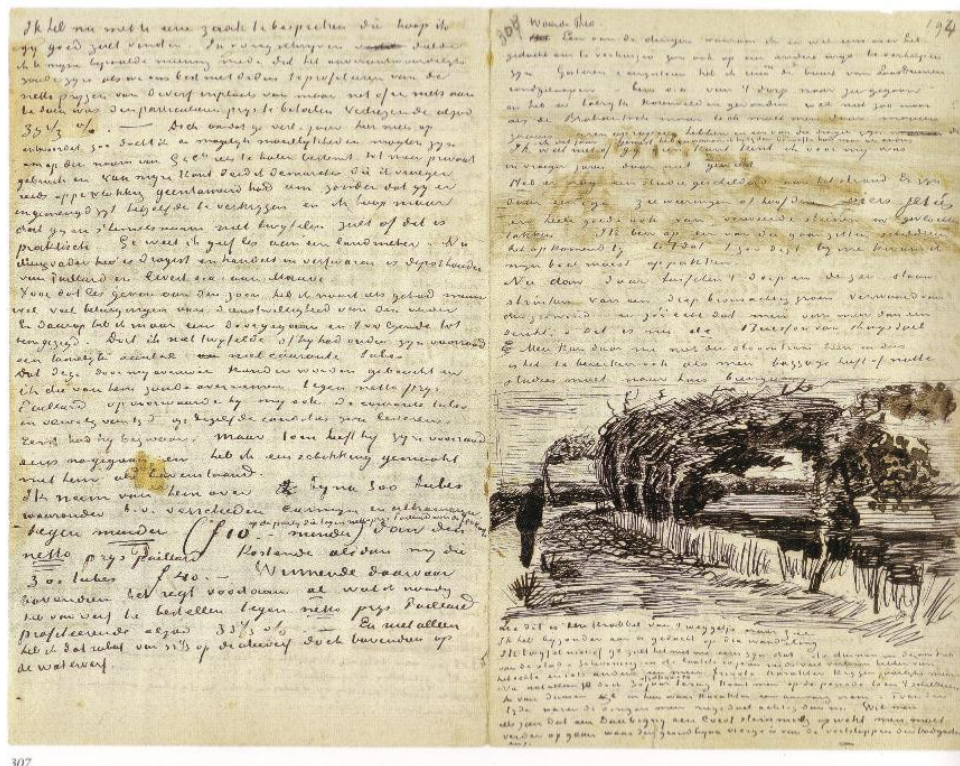
1882-1883 (Between the ages of 29-30) there is overwhelming evidence he had discovered and dedicated himself to his creative passion and all his energies are intensified in this area (**highly compact, pastiness with strong UZ, rising baselines, connectedness**)

His sense of colour was emerging and he was painting frenziedly. We can see his belief in his passion and his driven pursuit (**there is more movement and speed, script even smaller, still highly compact, pastiness with strong UZ and rising baselines, connectedness, thread, right tending LZ, ticks**). Self directed, with strong, impatient, follow through (**strong LZ vertical downstrokes with ticks**) and there are already signs that his mental or emotional brakes were not working properly (**narrow right margin with words 'falling off' page**). We can also see the amount of pressure he started to put on himself (**displaced pressure in his signature. Covering stroke in MZ of 'V'**). In spite of his high hopes and attempt at level headed reasoning, it was around about this time that he had a premonition of his own curtailed life. The feeling that time was running out would have likely increased the pressure he put himself under. That, combined with the passion he felt for his subject, and particularly at this stage of his life, with colour.

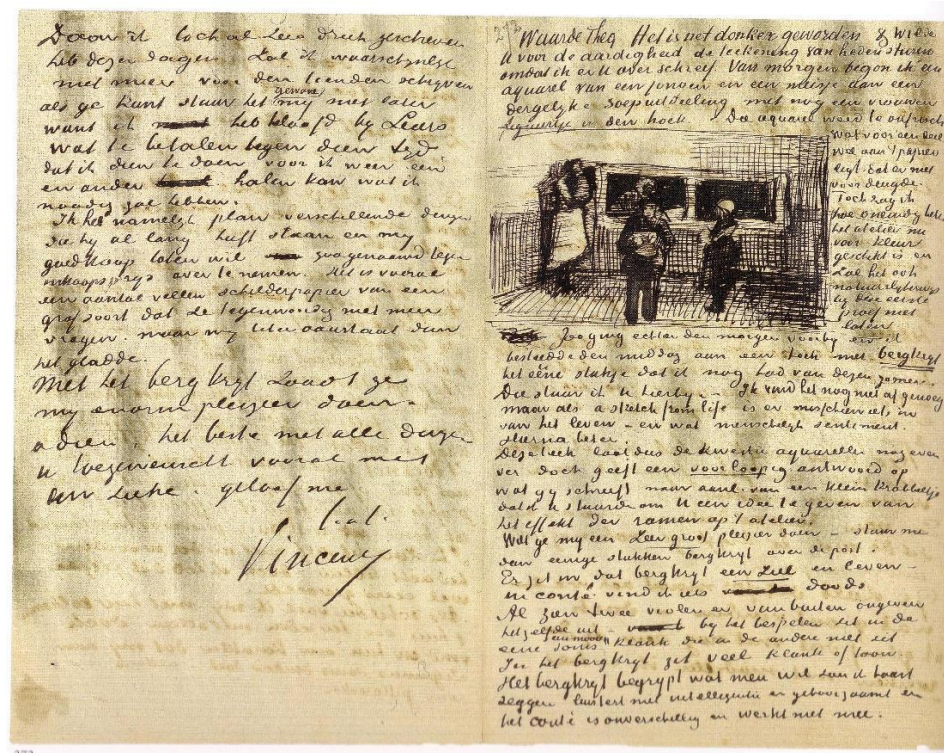
His self esteem was improved and his sense of self and pride had matured (**'I' in 'Vincent' is firm and slightly larger than other letters showing increasing positive self esteem – enforced/ backed up by pot lids and coiled shapes (in capital letters and in 'c' of 'Vincent') – a stronger sense of self and pride**). He was on a mission to realise his dreams and aspirations (**displaced pressure in UZ**) and put himself under huge pressure and tension (**flooding on upstroke of V in 'Vincent'**).

He has also learned to guard against intrusion into his personal life (**covering stroke in V of MZ in Vincent**). We can see how determined he was, even to the extent of sublimating his drives; equally we can see the emotion, tension and anxiety in his desire to fulfil his dreams in which he was completely absorbed (**if the pressure was decreased, hence the flooding, this would**

have warned of the onset of emotional or health problems) He didn't want to be ignored and he wanted to do things his way (**displaced pressure, pot lids**). His senses were heightened and he was completely immersed in and absorbed by his work (**pasty**).



1883



272

Temporary feelings of happiness and optimism (*rising baselines*) replace the depression brought on previously, following his bursts of energy and creativity (*falling in one sample/ stable in another*), although we can still see signs of unconscious emotional heaviness (*letters falling down right hand margins*) and his driven, obsessive, single-mindedness. He was literally in danger of being overwhelmed by his unconscious (*pasty, broad, falling words at end of sentences*).

In a general sense he was broad minded, non-discriminating, disinterested in restrictions placed by society (*broad*). Van Gogh wasn't interested in status and glory (at this stage), he was only interested in observing and recording the truth – what was genuine and real in life – real people – colour, shape, texture and form.

Imaginative and artistic, he had a propensity to push for intense expression, and he used subjective gut-reactions to guide him, which means that he was becoming more inclined to make decisions impulsively, without thinking things through (*broad, pasty, marked right slant, fast speed*).

We can see how intense his feelings were – how deeply he felt, and how frustrated he could become, and that he had a tendency to bottle up these feelings until he could contain them no more and literally erupted (*ink filled smeary letters towards the end of the script; leanness; narrow margins; upright; impatience ticks, pot lids*).

The ink filled and smeary letters are also a clear indication of how much art inspired him and how much his creative juices were working for the benefit of the finished article, but equally were an outlet for his bottled up intense emotions. We can see how he begins his work with concentration and precision, how he tends to the detail, practising over and over again in order to be spot on. Over a period of time, we see the true personality emerging – the submerged emotion – the intense feelings of someone who is rich with well developed senses, and filled with a true sense of wonder with colour and every richness that the world has to offer, both in nature and in mundane daily life. He even sees beauty and interest in the peasants. He is literally bursting with a need to express himself on paper (*Maslow's 'freshness of appreciation'*) and conversely to try to make society understand, and appreciate life.

NB. It is interesting to note (in the pictures) the *strongly right tending/ marked right slanting* trees at this stage of his development. These become noticeably 'stunted' towards the end of his life – indeed some trees are only stunted or lopped/ pollarded on the right side (*his future*). You could argue that he only drew what he saw, but he did choose his preferred subjects.

bereikt komt te meer ambacht en
 als men 1 reyt in den grond van nagaan
 omhert zo goed als met verschil van mynen
 gestaat. Lang geleden schreef dat ik
 tegenwoordig mijn opgeruimtheit van terug
 begin te krygen wat ik werk betreft en een verhooven
 dat het loch gun zal. Ik heb dat al vroeger
 ook wel getuid ondanks alles maar men raakt
 loch van streek onwilligheid en heeft een
 melancholiek gevoel als zulke personen het afkanten
 of 1 geen meer doet een slechter weg nemen.
 schryft ge spoedig? nu brief 3 al weer een welkom
 en als altyd. Will ge wel geloven dat
 een teken zo van een voet grootte valstrekt
 een teken zo van een voet grootte valstrekt

1883

Determined and obstinate, he didn't know when to throw in the towel. There was impatience and an unbalanced discharge of energy and/ or anger without release that Vincent was sometimes unable to curb, resulting in sudden temper. Guilt and anxiety were likely to have been a big part of the picture. (*ink filled ovals, muddiness, smeary, right slant, connected*)

He was determined to express his feelings frankly and spontaneously through speech or by writing/ passionately and creatively in his art (*ovals open/ closed/ ink-filled*). He didn't want to talk about how he felt – he had a tendency to bottle things up. He wanted to express himself, but on his terms – he'd pick what he'd say, when, where and to whom – and then he'd talk/ communicate about his subject, until the cows came home – an outpouring that maintained his sanity and kept him in touch with reality, since he was in danger of slipping into a dreamlike unconsciousness that threatened to chew him up and spit him out (*open ovals, introvert type, connectedness, wide secondary width with wide word spacing*)

This all means he could be quite antagonistic towards people he didn't have time for (*angles, angles on baseline, clubs, wide secondary width, impatience ticks, pot lids*). Writing was a necessity for him. He wanted to communicate his ideas and thoughts (*right tending full UZ*)

He was like time bomb – ticking – and ready to go off. The *open ovals* showed his necessity for expression; the *pastiness* shows how intensely he felt; the *flooded ovals* his propensity to bottle up the things that really mattered; the *marked right slant with broadness*, a tendency to erupt in a manner akin to spontaneous combustion.

Waarde Theo, Hierby obtain ik u cragtes van
 een schilderij dat ik met meer anderen onder handen
 heb - het is een effekt van bloeiende boomen
 te in den achtergrond - By de tekeningen
 die ge krygen zult joudra Ruyssard hier komt zyn
 en 3 die van 't zelfde geval genomen zyn
 Wat my trap in de natuur was het verbazend

1884

In **1884** at 31 yrs, isolation creeps in, simultaneously positive self esteem emerges - opening a door for an outpouring of creative abilities. We can see the loneliness and deprivation he endured (**very wide word & line spacing – aerated, very wide secondary width**) and his restlessness (**dom & fluctuating LZ**). Equally we can see his need for space and air and time to breathe. He tried to retain clarity of his thought processes.

And then he became compulsive, extremely reserved and introverted, to the point where he avoided reality and escaped into a private world of his own. Obsession.

The great field all violet. The sky & sun very
 yellow. It is a hard subject to keep.
 Please remember me very kindly to
 Mrs Russell. and in thank I heartily
 shake hands. Yours very truly
 Vincent

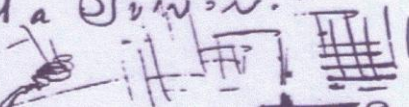
June 1888

By 1888 Van Gogh's a fizzing pot of effervescence. He's ready for the world now, but the world isn't ready for him (**larger size with greatly fluctuating MZ**) and it is more than likely that his behaviour is alienating society. He portrays an ebullient, proud style, but defensive stance (**large size with large MZ and narrowness**). He's still impulsive, pro-active, and restless (**greatly fluctuating LZ and tangling**), but now there's an indication of turbulence - he's full of nervous

energy, capable of many moods, and his behaviour bears the hallmark of a rash, impetuous, unpredictable temperament, a capricious disposition, and a loose cannon – he is agitated and blinded by feeling and his emotions rule over reason. He is unable to understand his own feelings and allows his thinking to become clouded as a result. He shows little restraint of emotion (*some attempt is shown in the little arcade MZ starting strokes and narrowness*), since he is deeply impacted by every external event and highly sensitive to atmosphere and people (*irregular rhythm, variable slant – some marked right slanting LZ and MZ – pasty with flooding, meandering baselines, LZ tangling, disjointed letters*). He's rebellious against authority, socially aggressive, reluctant to alter his own approach, and would mostly rather argue than smooth things over (*angular connecting strokes, thick vertical strokes with clubbed LZ, defiant 'k's*). He adopts an uncompromising stance (*some vertical emphasis emerging, with dynamic movement, clubbed pressure and deviated pressure in MZ*) but conversely finds his hypersensitive nature is actually troubled by conflict, causing him further emotional discomfort (*+ve irregularity*). It's a viscous circle.

Immersed in his own thoughts and values, he nevertheless wants to make his mark and prove himself – he has a strong determination to succeed. He is motivated by pride and a need for respect and some admiration, fuelled by underlying emotional unease and a growing sense of insecurity (*some vertical emphasis emerging– with dynamic movement – and deviated pressure in MZ*) He has reached a stage where he felt satisfied with the quality of work he was producing and was becoming more concerned with *who* he was, and this was leading to some frustration. In truth, he was totally preoccupied by his drives and his strong need to indulge them. Excess energy was being used in an impulsively determined way (*leanness, pasty, emphasis on the vertical, fluctuating MZ, clubbed LZ strokes*). Tortured, compulsive penstrokes (*flooding, connected, fast speed, displaced pressure*) – the 'flooding' increases directly as the page progresses and he becomes more absorbed in his work. There is spontaneous movement, part controlled, part inspired, and visionary, all tuned obsessively towards a goal which was ever increasing.

Meanwhile isolation had taken its toll. He was more ill at ease in social situations (*narrowness*). Socially and in his work environment, he had no real desire to enclose people in his life – he was mainly content working by himself and he could take people or leave them (*mainly lean with vertical emphasis; upright slant will further enhance this emotional self-sufficiency*) – although *some progressively close word spacing combined with connectedness, open ovals and right tending UZ* showed his need to communicate and share his thoughts and ideas, hence his necessity to write to his brother). In a general sense, his insensitivity to his own and others feelings, the inhibition of his self-expression, since he had a tendency to bottle things up, led him to put off problems and people instead of dealing with them (*leanness, emphasis on the vertical, narrowness, mainly wide word spacing*). He was irrationally masochistic and self-defeating – he had such high standards and he put himself under so much strain and yet he failed to look after himself properly, allowing his over indulgence in creativity to literally drive himself mad (*irregular rhythm, irregularity, meandering baselines, pasty/ muddiness, missing t-bars etc*)

I heard Rodin had a beautiful
 head of the Salome.
 I have been to the seaside for a
 week and very likely am going there
 again soon. - That shore ~~is~~
 lands - fine figures there
 like Cimabue - straight stylish
 I'm working at a ~~drawn~~ 

le blanc cru et dur d'un mur blanc
 contre le ciel à l'unique d'expression
 et d'une façon étrange par le blanc cru
 et ce même blanc rabattu par un ton
~~très~~ neutre Car le ciel même le colore
 d'un ton blanc ~~très~~  blanchis entièrement
 à la chaux (blanchis)

Vincent was forward thinking – visionary – proactive, keen to move forward yet uninterested in social structure. He liked to stand apart from the crowd and create his own rules. He would have disliked studying or working in a conventional way. At this stage of his painting career he had become impatient with details and routine – he was keen to follow his inspiration and ideas. He was affected deeply by the nuances of every invisible mood in both other people and nature – causing him to switch from being compliant and gentle in one moment, to being stubborn, antagonistic and socially dismissive the next. In a way his talent backfired on him. He was becoming increasingly further removed from a sense of reality, in spite of his earlier recognition for practical considerations, and this made him appear eccentric. Although Vincent himself would have been indiscriminating in his relationships, any personal relations with him would have been difficult, unless their partners understood their worldly nature. It is unlikely that a prostitute or peasant or generally the type of people he mixed with at the time, would have had the capacity of intellect to connect with this man and his worldly nature. He simply didn't fit and didn't want to fit. ([Jungian Introverted Intuitive/ Feeling Type](#)).

His vociferous letter writing to Theo fulfilled his needs on two levels – brotherly love and devotion to his brother combined with a practical sense of knowing where his bread was buttered. He didn't just derive pleasure from being stimulated by external things of a sensory type (people, places, nature), he equally sought peace and fulfilment from within – from his own contemplative nature and solitude. So we can see that his need for communication was satisfied by writing throughout his life – since he could chose the subject, and begin and end the conversation when he suited him. Vincent trusted what emanated from his heart and mind, whilst maintaining the solitude, from which he derived peace and the concentration to focus on his chosen subject.

He publicly gave the impression that his self esteem was firm and self confidence was shining through. He wanted people to believe he was more self assured than he really felt (*signature matches the text, larger, but is no longer underlined and I dot of Vincent is firm and larger than PPI in script, broad*). Privately he still doesn't know who he is and suffers from feelings of inferiority (*weak and greatly fluctuating MZ, disjointed letters, mixed slant or variations in slant, arrhythmic and slightly stilted*). But he does know his worth in terms of his artistic capabilities, and he so contemplates ambition, his status, and his desires for recognition of his achievements (*good HT; some vertical emphasis emerging, medium/ large size; leanness in LZ; originality & +ve Irregularity*). All this frustration increases his moodiness, restlessness and belligerence (*large and greatly fluctuating LZ – occ marked right slanting - and weak and greatly fluctuating MZ (occ marked right slanting) – both where the variants are larger than the dominants; meandering baselines; pot lids; impatience ticks; buckle k's; vanity loops on 'd's*) encouraging his volatile nature (*some marked right slant; flooding of ink; angles at baseline; stilted; clubbed strokes*) and giving credence to the claims that he was an alcoholic, promiscuous and capable of violent behaviour (*disturbed rhythm, variations in size and slant and spacing, displaced pressure, LZ clubs*).

N.B. In the English sample we are given a personal pronoun 'I'. This indicates a negative father fixation which left Vincent feeling some sort of guilt towards his father, fuelling him to be successful in his work. There is also some kind of unconscious/ inner anger directed towards his mother (*PPI's with some ink filled/ smeary tops – mother - and angular bottoms, plus right slant – father*)

Just before his death in 1890, there are dramatic shifts in changes of *slant* (from right to upright to right), *word spacing* (from wide to close) and in *size* (from medium to small), *baselines* (rising and falling) and pertinently, all within the same sample. In addition there are *overly extended endstrokes*, and where there are a couple of *extraneous t-bars*, they are both *very long*. This is final evidence of his huge generosity on a grand scale, and his philosophical attitude. Deep down he wanted to be on good terms with people – he cared about people. It was like he was saying "Take it, I want nothing in return." (*outward curved/ overly extended garland end strokes*). But he needed acceptance about himself and his identity – the hypersensitive nature is clear (*vanity loops on 'd's*). So the *very outstretched end stroke* was also a defensive, protective gesture, suggesting suspicion, aggression or a desire to ward off people coming too close to him. The *left tending 'd's* shows how difficult he found it to give up or forget things and people who had meant a lot to him in the past. We can see that he didn't really trust people and so didn't see any point of communicating and being sociable. He was torn, but he didn't want to be beaten by something he wanted. We can see how strongly goal and achievement orientated he had become (*very long t-bars with horizontal pressure*). He was not going to be easily diverted from his objectives and he continued to work in a determined and single-minded way. A mood of composure momentarily, followed by brief and intense activity. Utterly focused on his work for the benefit of others. We can see how hard he focused his attention, working obsessively, trying to impose his will on other people.

Vincent van Gogh was a humanitarian and painter for the people (*pasty, broad, horizontal emphasis, legible, arcade, rounded, upward end strokes*) – the soul, essence and feelings of people were most important and he wanted to share his wonder and appreciation for every aspect of life. He was driven to express himself in a generous, honest and sensual way that gave pleasure and understanding, and never deviated from the truth. He was misunderstood all his life – firstly by himself, then by his parents, and finally by the rest of society. The only person who ever truly knew him, was his brother Theo.

Mais j'en croie que mon aplomb ne m'en
 manquera pas. J'ai tant de chagrin de quitter
 comme cela que le chagrin sera plus fort que
 la joie. J'aurai donc j'en croie d'aplomb résolu
 M. Pégion des choses vagues pour dégager
 de sa responsabilité mais aussi on n'en finira
 jamais jamais la chose traînera en longueur et
 on sera finant par se fâcher de part et d'autre
 moi ma patience est à bout à bout mon cher frère
 je n'en peux plus il faut changer même pour
 un pas aller...

Cependant il y a une chance réellement que le
 changement me fasse du bien - le travail marche bien
 j'ai fait à l'ode de l'herbe fraîche dans le parc dont
 il y en a une d'une simplicité extrême en vici un croquis



halif. un bon de pin
 violacée, et puis de l'herbe
 avec des fleurs blanches et
 des papillons un petit ruisseau
 et d'autres brins d'arbres dans
 le fond tout en haut de la
 toile. Je serai la base de
 je suis sûr que l'œuvre de
 l'œuvre me servira
 et me rendra insensible

à tout le reste et de bonne humeur. Et je n'y laisserai
 aller rien pas sans réflexion mais sans m'apaisant sur
 des regrets de choses qui auraient pu être.
 Ils disent que dans la peinture il ne faut rien chercher ni
 espérer qu'un bon tableau et une bonne cause et un bon
 dîner comme mes amis de bon cœur sans compter
 les parentises moins brillantes. C'est peut-être vrai et
 pourquoi refuser de prendre le profit? surtout si aussi l'œuvre
 ou donne le change à la maladie.
 Bonne poignée de main à toi et à ta je suis sûr que
 je te vas faire une peinture pour moi d'après le motif de portrait
 cela ne me paraît pas impossible maintenant je devine
 j'espère à bientôt - et voyons éparpillez moi ce compagnon
 de voyage forcé. - t. a. t. Vincent.

Les personnages sont vêtus de couleurs claires et on ne voit pas de ces costumes
 de maintenant ou bien des vêtements de l'antiquité. Deux personnes causent
 d'un côté. Des hommes autour de l'autre au centre une femme avec
 enfant dans les bras avec elle une fleur sur une personne en fleur
 une figure sera bleu mystique une autre citrouille claire une autre rose
 tendre une autre blanche une autre violette. Le terrain sera
 prairie piquée de fleurettes blanches et jaunes. Des montagnes bleues
 avec une ville blanche et un fleuve. Toute l'harmonie toute la nature
 simplifiée mais comme elle pourrait être si elle ne l'est pas.
 Cette description ne dit rien mais on verra le tableau en le regardant longtemps
 un croquis est fait à une ressemblance totale mais bienveillante. De
 toutes choses auxquelles on pouvait s'attendre on a évité de s'écarter d'une simplicité
 étrange et heureuse des antiquités fort bien traitées avec la crise moderne
 j'ai reçu aussi avec plaisir André Bonzen qui avait l'air fort et catin
 et raisonnel mais avec une grande gentillesse. Une des choses artistiques
 cela me faisait grand plaisir qu'il eût vu le tableau qui j'étais à Paris
 moi-même à la lettre et bientôt je l'embrasserai en pensée t. a. t. Vincent.

In Conclusion, it is true that Vincent van Gogh's life swung like a pendulum - from paying lip service to being a prosaic and conventional business man – to puritanical self denial – to obsession with creative expression, which finally brought him to his knees. He was intoxicated

with the world around him and yet he lived life by a huge dose of reality. Somewhere along the way he fused his opposing abilities – of objectivity and subjectivity, with intelligence and creative talent - long enough to achieve something that would leave a hallmark on the world for centuries to come; benefiting people from all echelons of society, and exposing truth on many different levels into the bargain. It should be noted that although van Gogh had a high intellectual capacity, possessed a certain flair and independent style that would *not* be molded by conventional teaching, his final works were produced as a result of sheer hard honest work. The journey that led him to produce this art work, was deeply pitted with sometimes unendurable obstacles that drove a once-upon-a-time gentle, caring human being into someone determined and obsessive, frustrated and volatile, full of angst and loneliness, and all because he pursued his *métier* to the exclusion of virtually everything else in life. He refused to deviate from his path and never allowed himself to conform or be distracted by the general rules that apply to society. He only became mad because he put himself under so much pressure, and because he was osmotically and dangerously influenced by everything and everybody around him. Everyone played their part, and Vincent was like a time bomb, ticking and ready to go off – literally waiting to self combust. Part of the problem was that he never understood himself. Certainly he was never understood by others. He was born before his time. He marched to a different drum beat, and alienated people by his eccentric behaviour. In truth he was a humanitarian and selflessly sacrificed himself for a curtailed life's work of self expression.

As a nation we are intrigued with Vincent van Gogh – the 'real' man, his life, his death, and all the variations and nuances of living in between – to such an extent that our fascination almost overshadows his work – which ironically was the real meaning of his life. We know that as a man he was happy to remain an enigmatic character, since it was never about himself. And so if anything can be gleaned from analysing his handwriting, it is this – Vincent was a generous, caring, thoughtful and brilliant man who was influenced and inspired by the natural world around him. When he did a job, he wanted to do it well. He was strongly motivated to share his insights and creativity with his fellow man. He lived and breathed his work. He was truly a painter for the people – he wanted everyone to see what he could see, to understand and feel everything he saw and felt, and to be affected by colour and poverty and see beauty in ugliness. By trying to analysing the man too much, we are missing the point. So perhaps we could all just settle down and enjoy the paintings. It's what he would have wanted.