



Press release

— Auvers-sur-Oise // 13 June 2017 —

Vincent Van Gogh's top floor neighbour at the Auberge Ravoux exhibited for the first time

Vincent Van Gogh's top-floor neighbour has been discovered, and the Institut Van Gogh is exhibiting two of Anton Hirschig's paintings at the Auberge Ravoux.

Today 16 June 2017 is the anniversary date of the painter Anton Hirschig's arrival in Auvers-sur-Oise. The Institut Van Gogh is paying homage to him by exhibiting two of his canvases in the room where he lodged in the Auberge Ravoux. Anton Hirschig was at Van Gogh's bedside when he died, and became the last messenger of Vincent, his neighbour from the next bedroom. Although Anton Hirschig's place in the history of art relates to this one event alone, he nevertheless deserves some recognition as an artist. He receives it now, thanks to the Institut Van Gogh.

It has taken 30 years of research to track down Hirschig's « work » !

Thanks to the cooperation of the Drouot Auction rooms in Paris (notably Maître William Le Calvez), Dominique-Charles Janssens has managed to acquire three paintings by Anton Hirschig at auction.

The two canvases which are to be exhibited on 16 June have been excellently restored by Mme France de Viguerie. They have been admirably well framed by two local Valdoise craftsmen, Jean-Paul Coguic and Jean Havar. With Van Gogh in mind, they have chosen 'white wood' framing, just as the great artist himself might have preferred. In fact Vincent's term 'white wood' ('bois blanc') is a translation from Dutch and really means wood stripped of its bark and unpainted. Despite this, the conservator René Huyghe interpreted Vincent's French literally and had his paintings framed with white painted wood at the time of his exhibition in the World's Fair in 1937 !

Anton Hirschig (1867-1939), Van Gogh's last messenger

In mid-June 1890 **Anton Hirschig**, a Dutch painter of 23 years, in search of good advice, went to the Goupil gallery in Paris, and introduced himself to **Theo van Gogh**. As a result of their meeting, Hirschig decided to go to Auvers-sur-Oise, where Theo's brother Vincent had just taken up residence.

There'll be a Dutchman coming to see you, recommended by Bock who sent him to Fontainebleau, but it's not to his taste. I don't know whether he's any good; he had nothing to show me.

Extract from a letter from Theo to Vincent, 15 June 1890

This is how **Vincent van Gogh** on 16 June made the acquaintance of Anton Hirschig, who became his co-lodger in the next room on the top floor of the Auberge Ravoux. His first impression was soon despatched to Theo:

I was pleased to make the acquaintance of the Dutchman, who arrived yesterday. He seems much too nice to become a painter in his present circumstances. But if he insists, I told him he would do well to go to Brittany with Gauguin and de Haan, because he'll be able to live there on 3 francs a day instead of 5 here, and he'll be in good company.

Extract from a letter from Vincent to Theo, Auvers-sur-Oise 17 June 1890

A few days later he expanded :

The Dutchman is working fairly hard, but overrates the originality of his vision, considerably in fact. He's producing studies rather like Koning's. A bit of grey, a bit of green, with a red roof, and a greyish-white road.

What can one say in a case like this ? If he's got money then of course let him paint. But if he's got to work hard at finding buyers then I pity him. Just like I pity those who might be buying at a price a bit too high. Yet if he just works hard every day, he could make it. But on his own or in the company of painters who don't work hard, I don't think he'll come to much.

Extract from a letter from Vincent to Theo, Auvers-sur-Oise 24 June 1890

Adeline Ravoux, the innkeeper's daughter, has her memory of those days :

Tommy Hirschig [...] was a jolly chap, not a great worker, more interested in pretty girls than in painting.

« Les Souvenirs d'Adeline Ravoux sur le séjour de Vincent van Gogh à Auvers-sur-Oise », Les Cahiers de van Gogh (no 1, 1956)

Vincent van Gogh's assessment was right: Hirschig has not made a name for himself in the history of painting !

On the other hand his name will be forever associated with that of his illustrious compatriot for having been present at his death. It was Hirschig who was charged by Dr Gachet with the task of taking the dramatic news to Theo in Paris of what had happened in Auvers-sur-Oise. Thanks to this involvement the two brothers were united for the last time : Vincent died during the night of 28/29 July in the arms of Theo.

Who we are : The Institut Van Gogh, a non-profit organization (French association law of 1901) was created in 1987. To achieve its aims, it calls upon a world-wide network of experts in the museum field.

Its objectives are:

The conservation of the Auberge Ravoux and the cultural program relating to Van Gogh's room

The preservation of the environment in Auvers-sur-Oise, which inspired the last masterpieces of the artist

The acquisition of one or more paintings of the Auvers period

Support of research on the life of Van Gogh

The Institut has been presided by Dominique-Charles Janssens for the last 30 years. It is situated in Auvers-sur-Oise alongside the Auberge-Ravoux. Since 2003, the Scientific Director of the Institut Van Gogh is Dr Wouter van der Veen.

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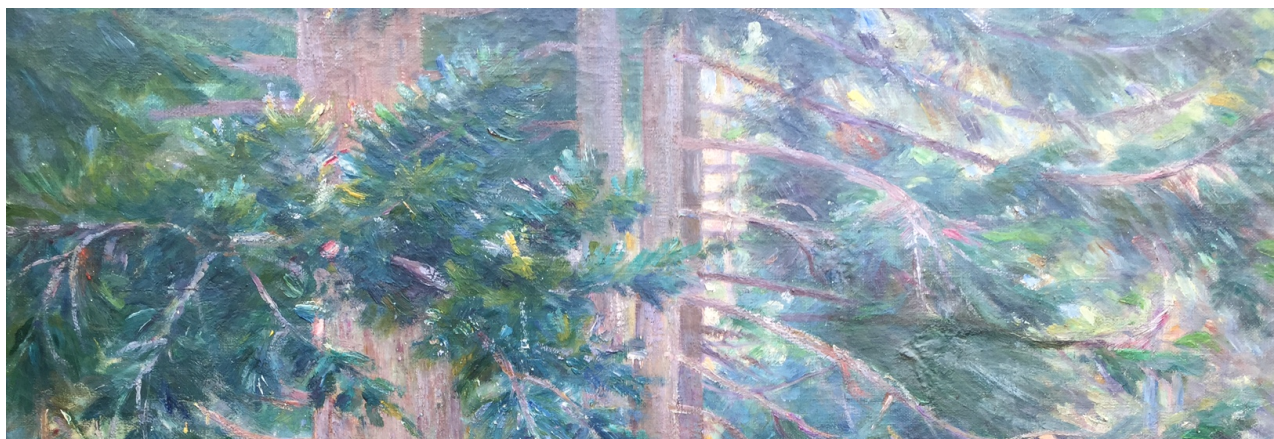
Twitter : [@InstitutVanGogh](#)

Instagram : [@InstitutVanGogh](#)

Press contact : Clara Moreno - +33 (6) 12 56 70 07 - clara@morenoconseil.com



Anton Hirschig (1867-1939) - PEASANT WOMEN AT REST IN THE FIELDS © Institut Van Gogh





Anton Hirschig (1867-1939) - Woodland view © Institut Van Gogh



van gogh's room (on the left) and anton hirschig's one (on the right) à l'auberge ravoux @ institut van gogh