



Collection presentation Kröller-Müller Museum

Gallery texts in large-format letters

Dear reader,

In this document you can read the main gallery texts of our collection presentation in large-format letters. You will find the original texts on the walls of the rooms.

If you have any questions, comments or tips regarding the large-format texts, we would like to hear from you. You can contact us via **educatie@krollermuller.nl**

Please return the document to our reception desk after use.

Enjoy your museum visit!

Kröller-Müller Museum

The Kröller-Müller collection

Helene Kröller-Müller (Horst, Germany 1869-Otterlo 1939) began collecting art in the early years of the twentieth century. She had vast capital assets at her disposal, stemming from her father's trading company Wm H. Müller & Co, of which her husband Anton Kröller became director in 1889. With advice from art educator and critic H.P. Bremmer, Helene Kröller-Müller collected almost 11,500 art objects from circa 1907 to 1939: a large collection of paintings, but also drawings, sculpture, delftware, antique earthenware, Chinese art and graphic art.

From early on, she no longer collected purely for herself. She dreamed of a 'museum-home' that she wanted to build and donate to the community. This dream accounts for the large scale and the composition of her collection, with which she aimed to provide insight into the development in art from realism to abstraction since circa 1850.

She herself preferred to speak of a development from realism to idealism. Thus, she regarded Jean-François Millet, Jan Weissenbruch, Paul Gabriël, Isaac Israëls, George Breitner, Auguste Renoir and Henri Fantin-Latour as realists. To illustrate the development from realism to idealism she acquired paintings by Odilon Redon, Paul Signac, Georges Seurat and Jan Toorop. These

were followed by the idealists Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Auguste Herbin, Piet Mondriaan and Bart van der Leek. Later she returned to more realistic, neoclassical tendencies with works by Jean Metzinger, Gino Severini and Charley Toorop.

She also acquired several works dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, by artists such as Hans Baldung Grien and Lucas Cranach, whom she regarded as the precursors of the modernists.

For Helene Kröller-Müller, Vincent van Gogh is superior to all other artists. The exceptionally large number of his works that she acquired forms the core around which her collection is composed. The central position of Van Gogh must also manifest itself in her museum.

In 1938, a year before her death, her dream of leaving behind a monument to culture came true. Her 'museum-home' in the Hoge Veluwe, the beginning of the current Kröller-Müller Museum, was opened to the public.

Vincent van Gogh.

The collection of Anton and Helene Kröller-Müller

The work of Vincent van Gogh occupies a special place in the collection of Anton and Helene Kröller-Müller, the founders of the Kröller-Müller Museum. Thanks to them, the museum has the second largest Van Gogh collection in the world. In 1908 Helene purchases her first painting by Van Gogh at auction for 110 guilders: *Edge of a Wood* (1883). This is followed by no fewer than 90 paintings and more than 180 works on paper. Their budget is virtually unlimited.

Helene considers Van Gogh 'one of the great spirits of modern art'. In August 1880, when he decides to concentrate on his artistic practice after unsuccessful careers as an art dealer, teacher, theology student and preacher, Van Gogh is 27 years old. The pastor's son is convinced that he can also be of service to God as an artist. Helene, herself in search of a spiritual dimension in her life, can identify with the way in which Van Gogh also seeks this in his life: in humankind and in nature.

Since the opening of the Kröller-Müller Museum in 1938, the works of Van Gogh have hung in the heart of the building: a corridor around a small patio, now called

the Van Gogh gallery. The current arrangement starts with the paintings from Van Gogh's Dutch period (1881-1886), when he painted peasant life as a novice artist. The second part shows how Van Gogh further developed his own style during his French period (1886-1890), with expressive brushstrokes and an abundance of colour.

The light in this space is dimmed due to the fragility of Vincent van Gogh's drawings.

Becoming an artist

When Van Gogh decides to become an artist in 1880, he seeks to document the hard life of those who have to toil for their living. Initially he works in the Borinage and in Brussels, but in 1881 he returns to his parental home in Etten. There, the poor peasant population is subject for many studies on paper. His most important example is the French painter Jean-François Millet, whom he regards as the true peasant painter.

Van Gogh is largely self-taught, but in 1881 he seeks artistic support from his cousin by marriage Anton Mauve in The Hague. Mauve gives him painting lessons and instructs him to study still life painting. From late 1883, Vincent lives in the rural village of Nuenen, where his father is pastor, and where he finds plenty of inspiration.

With their characteristic heads they pose for a series of 'heads of the people'. His admiration for the old masters, particularly Rembrandt, leads Van Gogh to paint them in dark, earthy tints, with strong light-dark contrasts. The figure studies are in preparation for his first large composition: *The Potato Eaters*.

In November 1885, Van Gogh goes to Antwerp to study figure drawing at the academy. He finds the study too academic and too traditional and after three months he calls it a day. He travels on to Paris and moves in with his brother Theo.

Unprecedented mastery

During his two-year stay in Paris, Van Gogh discovers that landscape painting has been thoroughly modernized by the impressionists. Their use of bright, vibrant colours and attention to the light inspire him to experiment with bright, light colours and a looser brushstroke. To practice, he paints many still lifes, cityscapes and impressions of the landscape on the outskirts of Paris (Montmartre and the Seine at Asnières).

His view of the landscape also changes due to his admiration for Japanese printmaking. He leaves the hectic Paris behind and heads for the South of France. There

he hopes to find 'the clearness of the atmosphere and the gay colour effects' of the Japanese prints. In Provence, where he stays from 1888 to 1889, Van Gogh achieves an unprecedented mastery as a landscape painter. Even when he falls ill and admits himself to a psychiatric hospital in Saint-Rémy, he continues to paint as much as possible. He finds the motifs in his immediate surroundings: the wheat field outside his window, the garden of the hospital, the olive groves, the cypresses and the surrounding hilly landscape.

Van Gogh paints his final masterpieces in Auvers-sur-Oise near Paris. On 27 July 1890 he wounds himself with a pistol in a wheat field and dies two days later with Theo at his bedside.

Paintings and drawings of Vincent van Gogh, purchased by Anton and Helene Kröller-Müller

In 1908 Helene Kröller-Müller acquires the painting *Edge of a Wood* at an auction for 110 guilders. This is the beginning of the Kröller-Müllers' now world renowned Van Gogh collection. For the compilation of their collection of modern art, she is advised by the then authoritative art educator H.P. Bremmer, who has a special fondness for Van Gogh.

Helene and Anton Kröller-Müller purchase an exceptional number of paintings and drawings by Van Gogh. Sometimes this involves literally thousands of guilders per day. On several occasions they acquire an entire collection, as in 1928 with the collection of the Dordrecht art collector Hidde Nijland containing over a hundred drawings.

At the start of the twentieth century, Vincent van Gogh was only celebrated in small circles. The attention that the Kröller-Müllers devoted to Van Gogh contributed greatly to the recognition that his work currently enjoys.

1908

3 works: 4,924 guilders

Auction J.J. Biesing, Den Haag

Art dealer C.M. van Gogh, Amsterdam

1909

3 works: 4,160 guilders

Auction art dealer A.M. Reckers, Rotterdam

Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam

1910

7 works: 15,500 guilders

Art dealer C.M. van Gogh, Amsterdam

Art dealer Paul Cassirer, Berlijn

1911

12 works: 1,800 guilders

Art dealer C.M. van Gogh, Amsterdam

1912

32 works: 209,537 guilders + 30,000 Mark

Art dealer Bernheim-Jeune, Parijs

Art dealer Artz & De Bois, Den Haag

In Paris (through Leonard)

Art dealer Eugène Blot, Parijs

Amédée Schuffenecker, Meudon

Art dealer Paul Cassirer, Berlijn

Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam
Art dealer Eugène Druet, Parijs

1913

11 works: 30,705 guilders
Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam
Auction Manzi-Joyant, Parijs
Art dealer Eugène Blot, Parijs

1914

8 works: 10,000 guilders
Jacques Williame, Châteauroux

1915

2 works: 2,000 guilders
H.P. Bremmer, Den Haag
Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam

1916

1 work: 500 guilders
Art dealer Miedema, Rotterdam

1917

9 works: 30,550 guilders
H.P. Bremmer, Den Haag
Mrs W. Fortanier-Haakma van Royen, Utrecht
Art dealer W. Walrecht, Den Haag

Willem Steenhoff, Amsterdam
Art dealer Huinck, Utrecht
Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam
Auction art dealer Oldenzeel, Den Haag

1918

7 works: 43,040 guilders
Art dealer Huinck, Utrecht
Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam
Mrs H. van den Broek-Mauve, Scheveningen
Art dealer W. Scherjon, Utrecht

1919

5 works: 10,370 guilders
Auction art dealer Kleykamp, Den Haag
Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam

1920

38 works: 112,705 guilders
Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam
Werner Dücker, Düsseldorf
Art dealer Huinck, Utrecht
J.R. Tutein Nolthenius, Delft
H.P. Bremmer, Den Haag

1922

2 works: 8,990 guilders

Auction Frederik Muller, Amsterdam

Before 1923

2 works: price unknown

1924

1 work: price unknown

Legacy N.E. Krölller, Den Haag

1921-1925

1 work: price unknown

Mrs Begemann-Elbing, Nuenen

1928

113 works: 100,000 guilders

Hidde Nijland, Den Haag (through art dealer Kleykamp,
Den Haag)

Art dealer Wacker, Berlijn (through art dealer d'Audretsch,
Den Haag)

1929

1 work: price unknown

Art dealer Matthiesen, Berlijn

To give an indication of the value of the guilder at that time: a pound of coffee cost 44 cents in 1910, one guilder and 15 cents in 1920 and 99 cents in 1930 (source: Statistics Netherlands). According to the International Institute of Social History, 15,500 guilders in 1910 represents the sum of 188,998 euro today, 112,705 guilders in 1920 would now be 679,499 euro and 100,000 guilders in 1928 would currently be worth 841,458 euro.

Until 1923, the national currency in Germany was the Mark. Converted into today's currency 30,000 Mark would be around 196,870 euro.