

Thank you ADFAS Camden for this most interesting article by the NGA Curator SALLY FOSTER who explores Vincent van Gogh's obsession with sunflowers (*Dec 14, 2000*) in your March 2021 Newsletter. It is fascinating to know that Vincent Van Gogh actually painted seven Sunflowers, and where they have ended up.

## The Seven Sunflowers

NGA Curator SALLY FOSTER explores Vincent van Gogh's obsession with sunflowers

Dec 14, 2020

Vincent van Gogh painted seven sunflower pictures in Arles, France, between 1888 and 1889: four were painted in one week of August 1888, one in late November — early December 1888 and two in January 1889. Together, the seven *Sunflowers* produced by Van Gogh make up one of the most famous series of works in art history.

*"I'm painting with the gusto of a Marseillais eating bouillabaisse, which won't surprise you when it's a question of painting large SUNFLOWERS."* — Vincent van Gogh

1. *Sunflowers*, August 1888, private collection. The first in the series features a green vase with three sunflowers set against a turquoise background.

2. *Sunflowers*, August 1888, destroyed in 1945 in Ashiya, Japan. Similar to the first it had three sunflowers in a vase, but the background was dark blue and three more sunflowers had been painted lying on the table.

3. *Sunflowers*, August 1888 (signed), Neue Pinakothek, Munich. This third shows 14 sunflowers against a background of a light turquoise, with the vase and the table painted in yellow.



Vincent Van Gogh, 'Sunflowers', August 1888 (signed), Neue Pinakothek, Munich. Photo by Art Images via Getty Images

4. *Sunflowers*, August 1888 (signed), National Gallery, London. Towards the end of the summer, Van Gogh painted the fourth *Sunflowers*. While the previous three works contrasted yellows and blues, in this version he painted 15 sunflowers on a yellow background. By the artist's own admission the third and fourth versions were the most important of the series. Signing them 'Vincent', these two paintings were hung in the guest bedroom of his Van Gogh's 'yellow house' in Arles for friend and fellow artist Paul Gauguin.



Vincent van Gogh, 'Sunflowers', 1888. © National Gallery, London

This 'yellow on yellow' version — which will be on display as part of the *Botticelli to Van Gogh: Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London* exhibition — received great praise

from Gauguin, who described it as "a perfect page of an essential 'Vincent' style".

5. *Sunflowers*, November — December 1888, Somp Museum, Tokyo. Van Gogh often made copies of works he regarded as successful and important. He did this so that he could keep the original for himself but give a copy to his sitters, family and



friends, and exhibit with a view to sell. Between late November and early December 1888, Van Gogh painted his fifth version and the first copy of *Sunflowers*, a thick impasto painting after the previous version.

Vincent van Gogh, 'Sunflowers', November — December 1888, Somp Museum, Tokyo, photo by: Photo12/Universal Images, Group via Getty Image

6. *Sunflowers*, January 1889, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. An 'absolutely equal and identical' copy of the third version.



Vincent van Gogh, 'Sunflowers', January 1889, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. © Philadelphia Museum of Art

7. *Sunflowers*, January 1889, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. The final in the series, and an 'absolutely equal and identical' copy of the fourth version.



Vincent van Gogh, 'Sunflowers', January 1889, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. © Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Vincent van Gogh Foundation

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