

SUNFLOWERS

THE MYSTERY OF VAN GOGH'S GREATEST MASTERWORKS

DIRECTED BY **DAVID BICKERSTAFF**

Vincent van Gogh's Sunflowers are among his most famous works, and are some of the most iconic paintings in the world. In an extraordinary exhibition, the Van Gogh Museum took a new and revealing look at the five publicly-owned versions of sunflowers in a vase. And once again, the Van Gogh museum opened its doors exclusively to Exhibition on Screen.

From the Director

"I have had the privilege of filming Van Gogh's Sunflowers painting several times at the Van Gogh Museum. Like many others I thought I knew this iconic painting extremely well, but I couldn't have been more wrong. It wasn't until I was invited to film the work without its frame that a whole new narrative revealed itself. All of the painting's history was laid bare with some unexpected surprises, and it triggered a need to know more about this series of masterworks.

There are five Sunflower paintings that can be seen by the public today, but they are scattered across five different countries. They've never been displayed together but the privilege of film-making is being able to travel to locations like Tokyo, Munich, London, Amsterdam and Philadelphia and bring them together on film. Seeing them in this way you gain an unparalleled and surprising new understanding of the life and work of arguably the world's most popular artist.

By bringing them together on the big screen, you can closely compare and contrast each one, examining the power of the artist's obsessive hand and his struggle with colour and composition. It was such a joy to witness how unique each version really was, evidence of Van Gogh's exuberance for experimentation.

This cinematic journey brought the sunflowers series into sharper focus for me and revealed a new insight to the tragic circumstances that lead Van Gogh to fall out with Paul Gauguin, triggering the famous incident when he cut off his ear in a psychotic rage. Drama, struggle and a passion for life can be seen in every dash of paint in the Sunflower paintings. In my opinion, each one shows an honesty and a virtuosity that speaks to the enduring power of an extraordinary artist, who lived an extraordinary life."

David Bickerstaff



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