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*Ravine*, 1889, Vincent van Gogh



x-ray of *Ravine*, 1889, Vincent van Gogh

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON AND VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM DISCOVER LOST VAN GOGH PAINTING HIDDEN UNDERNEATH THE MFA'S VAN GOGH *RAVINE***

BOSTON, MA (August 3, 2007)—The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), and the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, have discovered a painting by Vincent van Gogh (1853 – 1890) underneath the artist's painting *Ravine*, owned by the MFA. Meta Chavannes, the MFA's Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Paintings Conservation, was examining x-rays of *Ravine* in response to a request from outside scholars for technical information on the Museum's six paintings by Van Gogh. The existence of a complete painting below the *Ravine* was confirmed by the x-rays and close examination of the paint surface. Upon meeting with the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam and Louis van Tilborgh, the Van Gogh research curator at the Van Gogh Museum, it was established that the underlying composition was most likely painted in June 1889, during the early period of Van Gogh's stay at the asylum of Saint-Paul de Mausole near the Provençal town of Saint-Rémy, and was re-used as a support for *Ravine* a few months later, in October 1889. Van Tilborgh related the x-radiograph of *Ravine* to a drawing Van Gogh sent his brother in mid-1889 entitled *Wild Vegetation*. Scholars have suggested that this drawing, in the Van Gogh Museum, forms part of group of around a dozen drawn copies of paintings that the artist sent to his brother Theo in July 1889, but no painting was known upon which this particular drawing could have been based. As a result of this current research, the lost painting has been re-discovered.

The re-use of canvas is not an unusual phenomenon in Van Gogh's earlier career, but in 1888 his brother Theo began to supply and pay for all of his painting materials. Thus it is unlikely that he hoped to save money by re-using the *Wild Vegetation* canvas when he began to paint *Ravine* in

October 1889. In fact, it has become clear from his correspondence with his brother that Theo was late in sending materials in this precise period, and that Vincent had completely run out of canvas by the time he painted *Ravine*.

In fact, there were four periods in the last two years of Van Gogh's life in which he ran out of materials impatiently waiting for his brother to forward new canvases and paints. It is as yet unclear whether more than a few paintings on re-used canvas can be ascribed to these periods.

Van Gogh's pen-and-ink copy of his painting of *Wild Vegetation* can be seen in the presentation of *Van Gogh's Drawings: New Insights* on view at the Van Gogh Museum through October 7, 2007. *Ravine*—the masterpiece that now covers the earlier painting—is on view in the MFA's Impressionist Gallery.

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*The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its encyclopedic collection, which includes an estimated 450,000 objects. The Museum's collection is made up of: Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments.*

*Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are: Saturday through Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.; Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 9:45 p.m. General admission (which includes two visits in a 10-day period, but does not include Gund Gallery exhibitions) is \$17 for adults and \$15 for senior citizens and students age 18 and above. Students who are University Members are free. Admission is free for children 17 years of age and under during non-school hours. Admission also is free (except for Gund Gallery exhibitions) during Citizens Bank Foundation Wednesday Nights (4–9:45 p.m.); voluntary donations are welcome. The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For general visitor information, visit the MFA website at [www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org) or call 617.267.9300.*