print - L'Homme à la Pipe

Object: print

Place of origin: France (etched)

Date: 1890 (etched)

Artist/Maker: Gogh, Vincent van, born 1853 - died 1890 (artist)

Materials and Techniques: etching print on laid tissue paper

Museum number: CIRC.125-1950

Gallery location: Prints & Drawings Study Room, level E, case MP, shelf 63

Descriptive line

'L'Homme à la Pipe'; A portrait of Dr. Paul F. Gachet, who is shown seated in a garden, holding a pipe to his mouth; Etching print on laid tissue paper; An impression of the only etching made by Vincent van Gogh; Bearing the collector's mark of Dr. Gachet and his son P. L. L. Gachet; France; 1890.

Physical description

L'Homme à la Pipe; Half-length portrait of Dr. Paul F. Gachet, who is shown seated in a garden, holding a pipe to his mouth. Railings and the suggestion of flowers and a tree are visible behind him; Etching print on laid tissue paper; In the top-right corner of image, the date '15 Mar 90' has been added in drypoint; Collector's mark of a cat's face is stamped, in red, at the bottom of the plate impression - this being the mark of Dr. Gachet and his son P. L. L. Gachet; Details of the print have been written in pencil on the reverse of the sheet by P. L. L. Gachet.

Dimensions

Height: 40 cm approx size of sheet, Width: 28 cm approx size of sheet, Height: 18.25 cm approx size of plate impression, Width: 15 cm approx size of plate impression, Height: 17.5 cm approx size of image, Width: 14.25 cm approx size of image

Museum number

CIRC.125-1950

Object history note

The plate for this print is held in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Other impressions are held by the British Museum (Registration Number: 1923.0711.1) and the Wellcome Institute Collection.

Note from a letter written by Martin Bailey who examined the V&A print on 22 January 2010:-

'The inscription on the reverse is signed by Paul Gachet Jr, the son of Dr Gachet. He (and Eugène Delâtre) published most of the surviving impressions. there could be up to nearly 100 surviving impressions (but they are still valuable, selling for around £50,000). ...'

'Nothing is known of the pre-1950 provenance of your print (Leicester Galleries, which sold it to [the V&A] for £37.16.0). However, it could be the example which was owned by Martha Edwards of Gloucester, and exhibited there in 1936 (see my "Van Gogh and Britain" catalogue, p.80, [see below]).'

'The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam was not aware of your print (and neither was I). Monique Hagemann in their documentation department is recording the prints and may well be in touch with you.'

Text from 'Van Gogh and Britain' by Martin Bailey:-

PORTRAIT OF DR GACHET
GIVEN BY PAUL GACHET TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM IN 1923

Etched in Auvers in 1890
Etching, 18 x 15 cm
The British Museum, London
F1664/JH2028

PROVENANCE
Paul Gachet Jr, Auvers; British Museum, London, 1923

REFERENCES
'The Graphic Work of Vincent van Gogh',
Van Gogh produced only one etching, a portrait of Dr Paul Ferdinand Gachet (1828-1909), the homeopathic doctor he knew in Auvers. He also painted two celebrated portraits of Gachet which he executed a week or so before the print. As well as a medical specialist, Gachet was an amateur artist and an enthusiastic collector of modern art. He also owned a printing press, and this gave Van Gogh his only opportunity to experiment with the etching process. The etching depicts Gachet, aged forty-two, smartly dressed and smoking his pipe. He is deep in thought, with a furrowed brow, and has a melancholic air. The setting is almost certainly his garden, on the outskirts of Auvers, where Van Gogh loved to paint. The date on the etching, 15 May, is incorrect and was most likely added to the plate retrospectively by Gachet. Van Gogh had Sunday lunch with the Gachet household on 15 June 1890, probably the date on which the print was made. Six weeks later he shot himself and it was Gachet who treated him for the two days before he died. Gachet named the print 'L'Homme à la pipe' (Man with a Pipe). Sixty-one impressions have been recorded, and this particular one was printed by Gachet's son, Paul (or possibly by his printer Eugène Delâtre). It was donated by Paul Gachet Jr to the British Museum in July 1923, making it the first work by Van Gogh to enter a British public collection. There are two of the Gachets' collectors' marks at the bottom of the print: on the left, the intertwined initials (P.F.G.), and in the centre, a cat's head. A second copy of the etched 'Portrait of Dr Gachet' came to Britain four years later, purchased by Henry Wellcome from Paul Gachet Jr for 700 francs (£6). Wellcome, who owned a successful pharmaceutical company, had an enormous collection of medical material from around the world. His primary interest in the Van Gogh etching was that it was the portrait of a medical specialist. His print was transferred to the library of the Wellcome Institute in 1936. A third copy of the etching (present location unknown) was once owned by Martha Edwards of Gloucester and was exhibited there in 1936.

Historical significance: This impression is of the only etching made by Vincent van Gogh.

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1038251/lhomme-a-la-pipe-print-gogh-vincent-van/