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Art's Endless Gateway

In "Art Never Dies," Sonny Rollins, a renowned jazz saxophonist well known for his vast array of musical contributions to the jazz world, describes the immaterial soul of art and explains how its infinite nature shapes the world. While technology and politics seem to define our daily existence, providing comfort and ease, art connects to something more profound, such as human intuition and the soul. In other words, art holds never-ending insight into our true nature. Rollins adds that new musical compositions are created by pulling inspiration from older ones, particularly in jazz. Musicians do not copy, but build off each other's knowledge and consolidate ideas to create unique pieces. This reflects artists' skills to build and create an infinite amount of individual pieces using their shared skills, resulting in a uniquely creative piece each time.

Rollins's argument finds a strong foundation in many of the works by the Dutch Post-Impressionist painter Vincent Van Gogh: *Starry Night* (c. 1889), *Sunflowers* (c. 1888), and *Self Portrait* (c. 1889). Van Gogh corroborates Rollins's argument in "Art Never Dies" by illustrating the power of art to connect with human intuition and provide endless gateways into knowledge and below-the-surface thinking, bypassing the barriers of the material world, technology, and politics.



Fig. 1. Van Gogh, Vincent. *Starry Night*. c.1889. Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Starry_Night.

"Starry Night", an iconic piece by Van Gogh, illustrates complex artistic techniques, enticing themes, and rich symbolism. The rolling sky in the background, painted with bold strokes and contrasting hues of blue and yellow, thematically represents a harmony of intense emotion and energy, showcasing Van Gogh's proficiency in artistic elements such as line, shape, and color. The complex arrangement of the painting represents Van Gogh's inner turmoil, with the dim-lit village and the dark, overarching cypress tree in the foreground symbolically representing a theme of isolation and solidarity. The scale of the sky compared to the other objects portrayed contributes to a different idea: the heavenly power over the earthly, showing the sense of going beyond primary thought and thinking outside of the box. Meanwhile, the calm village, depicted in the middle ground, combats the sky's vibrance to create an equilibrium that adds depth within the different grounds, contributing to the piece's overall composition. Van Gogh's "Starry Night" demonstrates how his thoughtful approach to creating art produces an aesthetically pleasing, symbolic, and emotionally heavy piece for the viewer.



Fig. 1. Van Gogh, Vincent. *Sunflowers*. c.1888. [vincentvangogh, https://www.vincentvangogh.org/sunflowers.jsp](https://www.vincentvangogh.org/sunflowers.jsp).

Next, Van Gogh's creation, "Sunflowers," is a renowned artwork that encompasses his full artistic ability through various elements of art and design, powerful themes, and potent symbolism. The vibrant hue of the sunflowers, combined with the bold brush strokes, create a textured, dynamic, and vivid composition that catches the viewer's eye. The thoughtful placement of the vibrant flowers in a vase with the bright background surrounding it shows the principle of contrast, reflecting overarching themes of unity and balance. In terms of symbolism, the sunflowers represent feelings of liveliness and optimism, as well as the passing of time and the cycle of life, with their blossoms symbolizing small moments of happiness and success. "Sunflowers" is a genuinely marvelous creation of Van Gogh, which displays how his innovative approach to the composition of art can portray complex emotion and thought-provoking insight for the viewer.

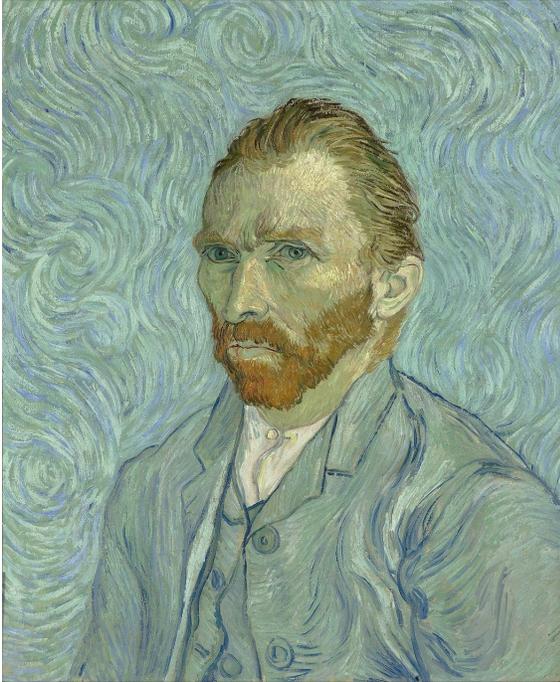


Fig. 1. Van Gogh, Vincent. *Self-Portrait*. c.1889. *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Gogh_self-portrait_%281889%29.

Lastly, Van Gogh's infamous creation, "Self-Portrait" exemplifies his ability to create meaning in his artworks through creative artistic and design elements, thoughtful symbolism, and meaningful themes. The painting, created with a complex selection of brush strokes and a vast use of different colors, draws viewers' attention with its unique features. The wavy, flowing lines in the background bring out a fundamental principle in art: movement. This adds a new layer of depth to the painting, portraying the background slightly in motion and creating a hypnotic effect on the viewer. Van Gogh's use of intricate details like texture and color matching highlights his intentions to pursue emotion and symbolism beyond just the aesthetics of the painting. Symbolically, this self-portrait serves as a gateway into his complex turmoil, showing his self-expression as he conquers challenges in life. Van Gogh's "Self-Portrait" is an intricate artwork with numerous unique elements contributing to the deep meaning below the surface.

This exploration of Van Gogh's work, specifically *Starry Night* (c. 1889), *Sunflowers* (c. 1888), and *Self-Portrait* (c. 1889), strongly supports Rollins's argument in "Art Never Dies." Treading away from the traditional focus on Roman and Greek mythology and biblical themes, Van Gogh sought to find beauty in a more realistic view of the human state. Each of the three paintings exhibits patterns that resonate with Rollins's theory of art as "uniquely alluring" and a "deeply subjective response to the infinite spectrum of human experience." Through the works of Van Gogh, we are enticed to find a stronger appreciation for our daily lives as expressions of a broader, more universal human narrative. In other words, each of us can better understand our place in the universe by stepping through the gateway that Van Gogh's creations invite us to explore, thereby illustrating the power of art to connect with human intuition and provide endless gateways into knowledge and below-the-surface thinking, disregarding the barriers of the material world, technology, and politics.

Works Cited

Rollins, Sonny. "Art Never Dies." *The New York Times*, 18 May 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/opinion/sonny-rollins-art.html>.

Accessed 15 September 2023.

Note on the use of generative AI:

I used Microsoft Edge's Bing AI in the process of writing this paper. While I did not copy directly from the AI, I used the following prompts to better my understanding of the complex ideas in Sonny Rollins's article, "Art Never Dies," to create a well-rounded summary:

- What are some of the most potent concepts discussed in Sonny Rollins's article: "Art Never Dies"?
- What main ideas does Sonny Rollins emphasize in her article: "Art Never Dies"?