

## Vincent Van Gogh: The Early Sunflower Series



Hello:

I hope this finds you well and reading a good book. I'm currently reading, "Book of Fables: The Yiddish Fable Collection of Reb Moshe Wallich Frankfurt am Main, 1697." They are shorter than short stories, much like Aesop's Fables, only with a wry, Yiddish twist.

As I mentioned in my previous newsletter, Van Gogh painted in series, often producing three or more canvases of a similar scene and/or theme. The theme of four, uncatalogued canvases is an unexpected plot development in my current novel-in-progress: "Saving Van Gogh."

In this newsletter, I'm going to focus on sunflowers since the ones in our garden are starting to bloom.

Van Gogh said, "I feel the desire to renew myself, and to try to apologize for the fact that my pictures are after all almost a cry of anguish, although in the rustic sunflower they may symbolize gratitude."

Vincent van Gogh, to his sister, Willemien, 20 February 1890

Van Gogh's paintings of Sunflowers are among his most famous—the ones he did in Paris in 1887—less so. The four sunflower paintings pictured above had a special significance for Van Gogh and symbolized 'gratitude,' according to the quote above. He hung the first two canvases in the yellow house in Arles to welcome Paul Gauguin during the brief period when they were roommates. Gauguin acquired two of the paintings and kept them above his bed while he lived in Paris. Ultimately, he sold them to finance his South Seas voyage, which is how he ended up in Tahiti.

Meanwhile, here are the closeups of the earlier paintings:



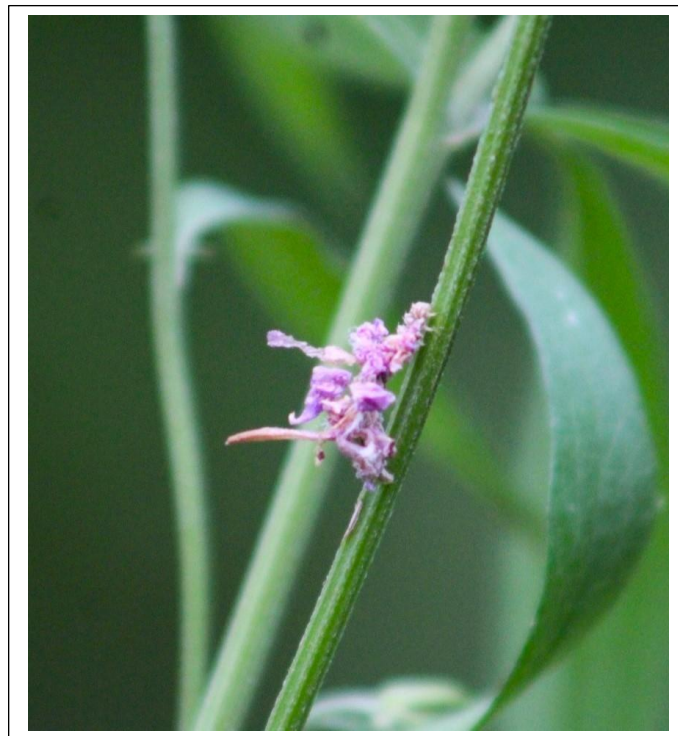


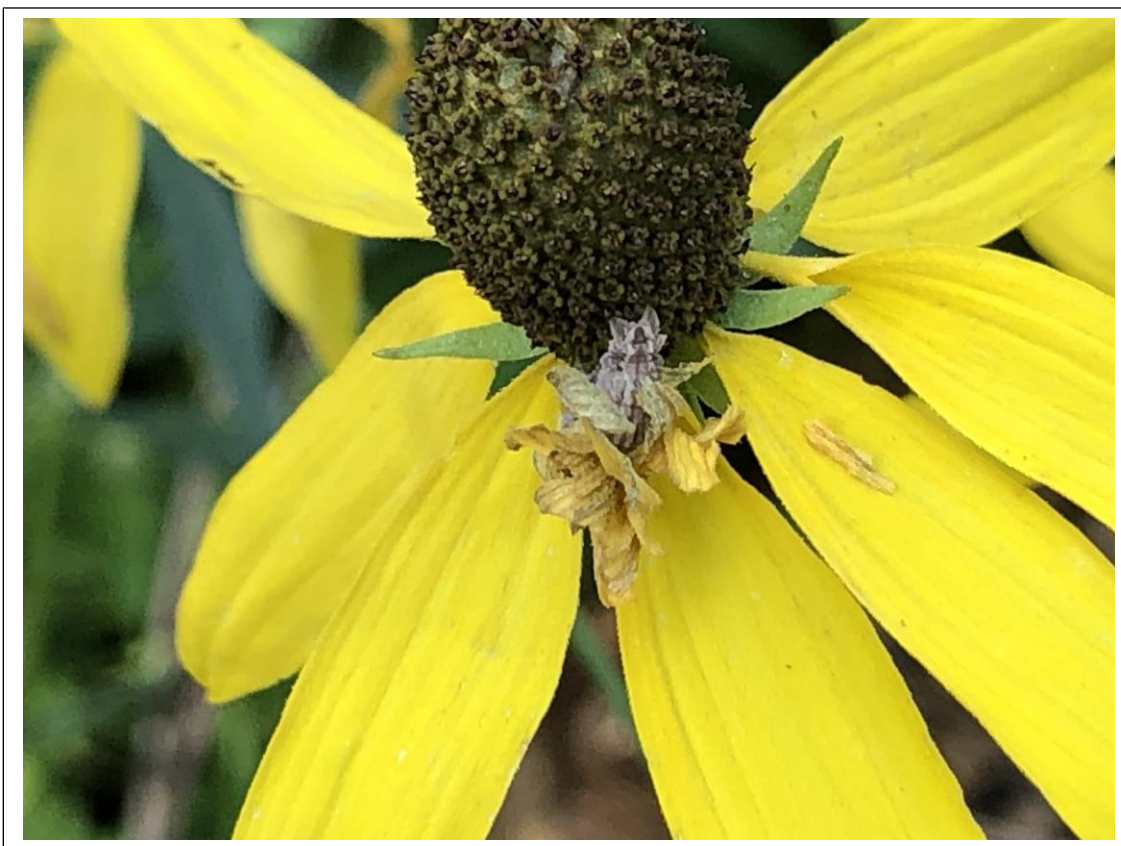
Van Gogh's later paintings of sunflowers in 1888 and 1889 reflect his intention to demonstrate that it was possible to create an image with numerous variations of a single color, without any loss of eloquence.

Or was it the fact that he was drinking too much absinthe and taking too much digitalis as a medication? Both substances have side effects: distorting vision and tinting objects yellow! More on this in the next newsletter.

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From our Garden: An update on the Wavy-lined Emerald Moth (*Synchlora aerate.*) It's moved from the Bee Balm (*Monarda Fistulosa*) to the Gray Headed coneflower (*Ratibida Pinnata.*) You can still see some Bee Balm blossom remnants from the previous host plant in the second picture.





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If you haven't already, please take a moment to leave a review on Amazon. It is really helpful with sales. Here is the link to my latest book, "[Stealing Picasso](#)." Thank you.

If you know of anyone who is looking for a speaker, the Kentucky Humanities Speakers Bureau is great about helping to subsidize appearances. I'm available as a speaker to talk about "[Stealing Renoir](#)," and how World War II was the largest art theft in history.

Or, if Kentucky history is appropriate for audiences, the Speakers Bureau will subsidize my appearance to discuss the findings from my research grant into the Underground Railroad in Kentucky. I'm also available to talk about gardening with native plants and "[Let The Earth Breathe](#)." If you or anyone you know would like to schedule a talk, here's the [link](#).

[Here's the link to my website for the most up-to-date schedule of talks.](#)

Happy reading.

Stephen Allten Brown

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