



Press release



Het Noordbrabants Museum's most important acquisition to date

Vincent van Gogh's *Watermill at Kollen* finally back in Brabant more than a century later

's-Hertogenbosch, 15 November 2017 – On Tuesday, 14 November, Het Noordbrabants Museum acquired Vincent van Gogh's (1853-1890) painting *Watermill at Kollen* at the Impressionist & Modern Art Sale held by Sotheby's in New York. This spring landscape with a watermill and buildings with red roofs is a relatively bright and colourful depiction in Van Gogh's Brabant oeuvre. It is one of the few important paintings from the artist's Brabant period that was still in private hands. It was purchased for almost 3 million euros (hammer price 2,6 million dollars). Exactly one year ago the museum acquired Van Gogh's watercolour *The garden of the vicarage at Nuenen*.

This is Het Noordbrabants Museum's most important acquisition and reflects the museum's aim of offering a representative overview of Van Gogh's Brabant period by means of original works by the artist. *The Watermill at Kollen* could be purchased with financial support from the Province of Noord-Brabant, the Rembrandt Association, and the Mondriaan Fund, along with a 1999 bequest to the museum by Henriëtte M.J. van Oppenraaij. In making this purchase the museum was advised by the Van Gogh Museum.

Henri Swinkels, deputy of the Province of Noord-Brabant, is proud that this remarkable painting will soon be on view in Het Noordbrabants Museum as part of its collection: 'Het Noordbrabants Museum plays an important role in propagating Van Gogh's story. With this unique work a connection is made between the storyline in the museum and a physical Van Gogh monument in Brabant. This is important not only for culture, but also the leisure economy, nature and the landscape, branding, and international profiling. Thus, there are plenty of reasons why we, as the Province, were glad to support this purchase with a subsidy of 1.5 million euros. We are delighted the painting could be acquired, and that thereby something of Vincent can be brought home, to Brabant.'



Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), *Watermill at Kollen*, May 1884, oil on canvas, 60.5 x 80 cm

Acquired with support from the Province of Noord-Brabant, the Rembrandt Association, the Mondriaan Fund, and the Mrs H.M.J. van Oppenraaij Bequest

Purchased with support from:

Provincie Noord-Brabant

Vereniging Rembrandt

Mondriaan Fonds

Legaat H.M.J. van Oppenraaij



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Van Gogh's fascination with Brabant watermills

From December 1883 Vincent van Gogh lived for almost two years in Nuenen; first with his parents, and later elsewhere in the village. While in Nuenen he focussed on painting more than he had previously. He often chose to portray people at work, for instance weavers, and nature, as in the painting of the watermill at Kollen just purchased by the museum.

Although Van Gogh did not include any figures in this landscape, with its turning sails the watermill symbolizes working life. The flowing stream and the reflections of the structures in the water presented artistic challenges. Van Gogh wrote about the painting to his friend, the painter Anthon van Rappard. He had visited Vincent for ten days in May 1884 and they had worked together on various subjects in the vicinity:

'Since you left I've been working on a Watermill – the one I asked about in that little inn at the station, where we sat talking with that man whom I told you seemed to suffer from a chronic shortage of small change in his pocket. It's the same sort of thing as the two other water mills that we visited together, but with two red roofs, and which one views square on from the front – with poplars around it. It will be magnificent in the autumn.'

The Kollen watermill was located near the former Nuenen-Tongelre station. With 'the two other watermills' Van Gogh was probably referring to the watermills of Opwetten and Hooidonk, hamlets in the vicinity of Nuenen. Nowadays the actual Kollen watermill that Van Gogh painted in May 1884 is located in the municipality of Eindhoven. It was restored in 1975 and is a listed building.

Van Gogh Monuments

The acquisition of this painting by Het Noordbrabants Museum took place at a remarkable moment. Two weeks earlier, on 30 October 2017, the Province of Noord-Brabant, nine Brabant municipalities, and several Brabant cultural organizations signed a covenant stating their intention of protecting 39 selected valuable cultural heritage monuments related to Vincent van Gogh. *The watermill at Kollen* is one of these designated Van Gogh Monuments.

Its importance to Noord-Brabant

In the past years Van Gogh has become an ever-greater icon for Brabant. Since 2008 the Province of Noord-Brabant, Van Gogh Brabant, VisitBrabant, and Het Noordbrabants Museum have been working closely to promote this Brabant artist in the region where he was born and where his artistry came to fruition. In 'Van Gogh Brabant', five cultural heritage institutions in Brabant (Van Gogh Village in Nuenen, Vincent's Drawing Classroom in Tilburg, the Van Gogh Church in Etten-Leur, the Vincent van Gogh House in Zundert, and Het Noordbrabants Museum in 's-Hertogenbosch) have joined forces to preserve and share Van Gogh's cultural legacy in Brabant. There is increasing collaboration with 'Van Gogh Europe', a joint Dutch, Belgian, and French venture aiming to preserve and collectively promote Van Gogh's heritage.

Great attention for Van Gogh in Het Noordbrabants Museum

Het Noordbrabants Museum is the only museum in the southern part of the Netherlands to exhibit original works by Vincent van Gogh. Nine works are on view in *Het Verhaal van Brabant* (The story of Brabant), in a pavilion devoted to Van Gogh and his Brabant period. Along with the painting *Peasant woman digging* and the watercolour *The garden of the vicarage at Nuenen* (both owned by the museum), two permanent loans from the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed (Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands) and several



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works on temporary loan from the Van Gogh Museum, the Rijksmuseum, and a private collection are on display. The *Watermill at Kollen* will join them in a few weeks.

Van Gogh exhibitions

Since it reopened in 2013 Het Noordbrabants Museum has been devoting special attention to the world famous Brabant artist in its programming of rotating exhibitions. For instance, the museum recently conducted research on the works in its own collection, the results of which have been presented since this summer in *Van Gogh doorgelicht* (Van Gogh investigated). Also currently on view is *Loving Vincent*, featuring the genesis of the animated film of the same name (through 28 January 2018). Moreover, a show exploring Van Gogh's relations with his family, friends, models, and fellow artists is being prepared. Titled *Van Gogh's Intimate Circle* this international exhibition will be on view in Het Noordbrabants Museum from 21 September 2019 through 12 January 2020.

Visitor information

Het Noordbrabants Museum
41 Verwersstraat
's-Hertogenbosch
Tel. +31 (0)73 – 6877 877
www.hnbm.nl

Open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm.

Closed on Monday (except for holiday Mondays), New Year's Day, Carnival, King's Day, and Christmas Day.

Price of admission / Het Noordbrabants Museum

Adults: € 12

Museum Card, Rembrandt Association, and ICOM: free admission

Children 4 – 17 years: free admission

Het Noordbrabants Museum and the Stedelijk Museum 's-Hertogenbosch combine to form the Museum Quarter 's-Hertogenbosch, one of the Netherlands' largest attractions.

The price of a combi-ticket for Het Noordbrabants Museum and the Stedelijk Museum 's-Hertogenbosch

Adults: € 15

Museum Card, Rembrandt Association, and ICOM: free admission

Children 4 – 17 years: free admission

--- EDITORIAL NOTE ---

For questions about the acquisition:

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