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## The Museum of Modern Art

### VAN GOGH'S *THE STARRY NIGHT* AND *OLIVE TREES* REUNITED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

*The Starry Night*, arguably Vincent van Gogh's most famous painting and one of the most popular works in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, has been reunited with *Olive Trees*, 109 years after the artist painted them. One of seven modern masterpieces recently sent to the Museum from the estate of Betsey Cushing Whitney, *Olive Trees* is as brilliant and sun-drenched as *The Starry Night* is dark and turbulent. Both works are animated by a similar spirit, however, and mark the crucial point in van Gogh's development when he foregoes attempts to render nature objectively and instead insists on vigorous exaggerations of color and line.

"After a century apart, day finally rejoins night in this amazing reunion," says Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture. "Van Gogh considered these two masterworks as virtually twinned in their demonstration of his boldest, most innovative style."

Mr. Varnedoe has installed several of the Whitney works--including a pairing on one wall of *Olive Trees* and *The Starry Night*--in the Museum's second-floor Post-Impressionist Galleries. The paintings will remain on display through July.

In addition to the Whitney paintings, a promised gift of Michael and Judy Ovitz, Agnes Martin's 1997 series *With My Back to the World*, is currently on public view for the first time. As is the case with all her mature work, Martin's six paintings are finely tuned abstractions with a delicate linear structure. These recent works have an unprecedented sensuousity in their rich play of sunset and twilight colors, perhaps evocative of the New Mexico environment in which she lives. They are on view in the third-floor Painting and Sculpture Galleries through June.

"Mrs. Whitney has provided us with works that greatly enrich the range and breadth of our collection," says Mr. Varnedoe. "These works, together with the superb Agnes Martin series, represent the best of both ends of the modern experience--the classic together with the contemporary."

The Whitney paintings on view are

*Fishing Boats in the Sunset* (1891) by Paul Signac, a Neo-Impressionist seascape, set in Brittany, that was originally one of a series of five paintings intended to convey musical concepts in pictorial terms: in this case, a slow graceful adagio;

*Olive Trees* (1889) by Vincent van Gogh, a luminous and powerful landscape in which the trees heave and writhe in front of the "little Alps";

*Turning Road at Montgeroult* (1898) by Paul Cézanne, the last important and completely finished landscape that Cézanne painted in the North before retiring to Aix, a crucial picture that forms a bridge between post-Impressionism and Cubism;

*Self Portrait (Yo)* (1901) by Pablo Picasso, a dramatic--almost diabolical--early self-portrait, executed with tremendous youthful panache, from a period when Picasso was constructing and asserting his identity as an artist;

and *Study for "Luxe, Calme et Volupté"* (1904) by Henri Matisse, a study for an important and ambitious early work, painted under the influence of Seurat and the Pointillists, with the idea of an earthly paradise--here the South of France--brought out by the bold use of brilliant color.

"This is an extraordinary group of paintings, one that enables us to interleave new chapters, as it were, into our visual narrative of the masterworks of modern art," says Glenn D. Lowry, Director, The Museum of Modern Art.

Mrs. Whitney, who died on March 25, 1998, became an Honorary MoMA Trustee in June 1995. She had been a member of the Museum's International Council since February 1958. Michael S. Ovitz is a Museum Trustee, serving on the Painting and Sculpture Committee.

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