



Antwerp

24 November 1885 – 28 February 1886

Vincent arrived in Antwerp from the Dutch town of Nuenen on 24 November 1885. He enjoyed his first weeks in Antwerp, and he frequently wrote to his brother Theo about how happy he was with his decision to go there. Vincent approached various art dealers in the hope of selling his work. But Antwerp failed to yield the income Vincent had hoped for, and

he repeatedly had to beg Theo for money to get by. In January of 1886, he enrolled in a course in drawing from classical sculpture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp. He was delighted to see “nudes and antiquity again”, as he aspired to become proficient in figure studies. In the meantime, Vincent began to have serious dental problems, probably

caused by his unhealthy lifestyle: he was a heavy pipe smoker and ate poorly. To tackle the situation, he had many “bad teeth snipped off”. Classes at the academy were to end in late March 1886 but Vincent could not wait that long and left Antwerp for Paris on February 28 to further develop as an artist in the French capital.



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- a** **Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp**
Mutsaardstraat 31
- b** **Musée Moderne**
Venusstraat 34
- c** **Town Hall**
Grote Markt 1
- d** **Het Steen**
Steenplein 1
- e** **Cathedral of Our Lady**
Groenplaats 21
- f** **Saint Andrew's Church**
St.-Andriestraat 5



Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp

Address Mutsaardstraat 31

Vincent took drawing and painting lessons at the academy. The students mainly worked from (nude) models and that was exactly what Vincent aspired to train in. His drawing style was a sensation at the academy; it was completely new to them. However, Vincent was critical of the academy; in his opinion the students were learning an incorrect use of colour that was not "realistic" or "lifelike". After only three weeks Vincent had already had enough and left the art school.



Musée Ancien

Address Mutsaardstraat 31

Vincent often frequented the Musée Ancien, the museum for 'old art' with works by masters such as Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Jacob Jordaens and Jan van Eyck. He was a fan of Hals' work and had great admiration for his *Fisherman's Boy* (c. 1630). He enjoyed seeing paintings that were not "painstakingly smoothed out" and appreciated Hals's and Rembrandt's quick painting style as well as the manner in which just a few brushstrokes were adequate to convincingly render a form.



Musée Moderne

Address Venusstraat 34

At the Musée Moderne, Vincent saw paintings by Robert Mols, Hendri de Braekeleer, César de Cock and Henri Leys, among others. He was able to appreciate most of the collection's works, but he also saw 'horrible things'. Vincent was particularly interested in how the sitter's character was represented in portraits. In 1890, the collections of the Musée Moderne and the Musée Ancien were both moved to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (Leopold de Waelplaats).



Town Hall

Address Grote Markt 1

Upon arrival in Antwerp, Vincent immediately went to see the painting *La promenade sur les remparts* by Hendrik Leys. It was still kept at Leys's residence at the time. Vincent was familiar with it from prints and described it as one of the most beautiful works he knew. His visit was disappointing, however. He had expected a different composition, the colour of the painting was inadequate and the light in the room was 'fatally poor'. But, according to Vincent, the figures were rendered superbly. The work has been on display in Antwerp's town hall since 1897.



Het Steen

Address Steenplein 1

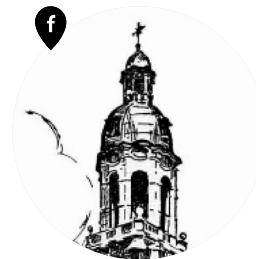
During one of his walks, Vincent painted a view of Het Steen, a medieval fortress by the river Scheldt that was part of Antwerp's defences. Vincent tried to sell the painting (this work is yet to be identified) through various art dealers in the city but it is not known whether he succeeded. He also sketched two drawings of Het Steen, now in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum.



Cathedral of Our Lady

Address Groenplaats 21

Vincent visited Antwerp's Cathedral of Our Lady to study works by Peter Paul Rubens. The cathedral housed a total of four religious paintings by the Antwerp artist. Two of these were discussed by Vincent in his letters – *The Raising of the Cross* (1609-1610) and *The Descent from the Cross* (1612). Vincent admired Rubens for his talent in depicting human suffering and praised the Flemish painter for his portrayal of everyday, attractive women.



St. Andrew's Church

Address St.-Andriesstraat 5

Vincent visited St. Andrew's Church on the advice of his brother Theo to see the painting *The Crucifixion* by Frans Francken II. He deemed it a good work, but wrote: "I imagine, though, that I can do it like that too, and the painting didn't tell me anything new." [Letter 551] He was more impressed by a stained glass window by Stella Maris that he called 'suberb – very very remarkable'. In 1889, the stained glass window shattered due to an explosion elsewhere in the city. A replica was installed on the north side of the church, above the Lady Chapel.

Would you like to complete the Antwerp Van Gogh Route?

Visit Vincent's former house on the Lange Beeldekensstraat 224 in Antwerp. Please note that this location is far away from the city centre. For more info, please see: www.vangoghroute.nl.