

A case of mistaken identity: Concerning the photographic portrait of Vincent van Gogh, age thirteen

What did Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) actually look like? We have self-portraits dating back to his time in Paris, when he was already thirty-three, but these 'selfies' do not always give a consistent impression of the person depicted. The painterly aspect proved more important to Van Gogh than a faithful likeness. All the same, there are certain constants: the ginger hair and beard, a high and slightly sloping forehead, and somewhat deep-set green eyes.¹ Interestingly, Van Gogh's contemporary Archibald Standish Hartrick felt that the most faithful resemblance was found not in one of the self-portraits, but in the portrait that John Peter Russell made of Van Gogh toward the end of 1886, in which he looks searchingly over his shoulder at the viewer (fig. 1).²

¹ John Peter Russell, *Portrait of Vincent van Gogh*, 1886, oil on canvas, 60.1 x 45.6 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. s0273V/1962.



2a
 Balduin Schwarz, *Theo van Gogh*
 (formerly identified as *Vincent van*
Gogh, aged thirteen), inscription
 'B. Schwarz, Passage St. Hubert 27,
 Bruxelles', 1873, photograph,
 9.8 x 6.2 cm, Amsterdam, Van
 Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh
 Foundation), inv. b4417-
 053V/1962.



Unfortunately, no photographic portraits are known from the same period to compare with the painted heads.³ Van Gogh was not a particular fan of the medium, certainly not at a later age. When his brother Theo (1857-1891) sent a recent photograph of their sixty-nine-year-old mother to him in Arles, Vincent thanked him but also wrote that 'I don't like it at all as a real likeness'. He went on to paint his own version of the portrait, stating, 'I can't look at the colourless photograph, and I'm trying to do one with harmonious color, as I see her in my memory'.⁴ Compared to the number of portraits that has survived of his close relatives, the haul of photographs in Vincent's case is extremely thin. There are several individual photographs known of Theo in his teens, twenties and early thirties, but only two distinct ones of Vincent – one traditionally identified as the future artist at the age of thirteen (figs. 2a and 3a) and the second is a portrait of him at nineteen (fig. 4).⁵

3a
Balduin Schwarz, *Theo van Gogh* (formerly identified as *Vincent van Gogh*, aged thirteen), 1873, photograph, 9.7 x 5.9 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4783V/1989.



Jacobus Marinus Wilhelmus de Louw, *Vincent van Gogh*, aged nineteen, 1873, photograph, 9.1 x 5.7 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4784V/1962.

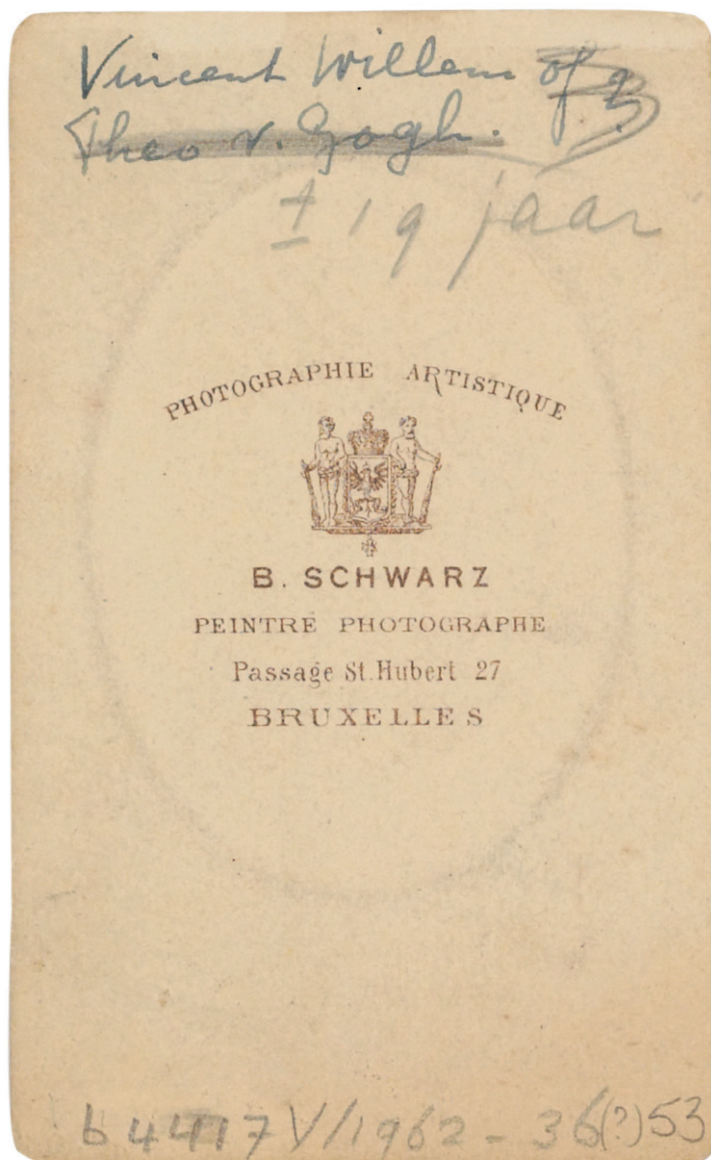


Brussels

The photograph of Vincent at the age of thirteen was published only after the Second World War. Ever since it has served as the archetypal 'portrait of the artist as a young boy', to paraphrase James Joyce.⁶ As such, it made its way around the world and can be found in many biographies. A few years ago, a Dutch TV programme compared the portrait with the portrait of the nineteen-year-old Van Gogh – with special technology – concluding that they do not show the same person.⁷ This came as a big surprise, and a limited examination was subsequently carried out in the Van Gogh Museum, which concluded that the identity

2b

Balduin Schwarz, *Theo van Gogh* (formerly identified as Vincent van Gogh, aged thirteen), verso, 1873, photograph, 9.8 x 6.2 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4417-053V/1962.



of the older youth was not in question. More recently, the museum was approached by the co-author of this article, Yves Vasseur, who was involved with the exhibition *Van Gogh in the Borinage* (Beaux-Arts Mons 2015). Vasseur had a number of questions as well as a theory as to why the younger boy in the photograph could not be Vincent. At this point, it was decided to work together to settle the debate regarding the subject's 'identity crisis' once and for all.

The photograph is undated but the cardboard mount of one of the two portraits includes the name and address of the photographer: 'B. Schwarz, Passage St. Hubert 27, Bruxelles' (fig. 2b). Assuming this is Vincent at the age of thirteen it would mean that he was in Brussels in 1866. While no such visit to the city during that year is known, it cannot be ruled out.⁸ Balduin Schwarz (1842-?), a German born painter and photographer, moved from Cologne to Belgium in 1868, where he first set up a studio in Ghent.⁹ He moved to Brussels as late as 1870 and opened his studio at 27 Galerie du Roi, which is part of the Passage Saint-Hubert. He is recorded there on 2 February and remained at the address for over three years. The famous Passage Saint-Hubert (also known as 'Les Galeries Royales Saint-Hubert') is a complex of three arcades with a glass roof that still exists today. It is a prestigious location and, thanks to natural light, an ideal setting for a photographer's studio. In June 1873, Schwarz moved to 56a Rue de la Madeleine and opened a new studio offering 'photographie artistique'.¹⁰

Vincent?

Since Schwarz did not set up his studio in the Passage Saint-Hubert until February 1870, Vincent would have to have been at least seventeen years old in this photo. While the boy in the image may very well have been a little over thirteen, his morphology does not really support the claim that this is a significantly older Vincent. In fact, we do know what Vincent looked like as a young adult, thanks to the portrait clearly dated January 1873, when he was close to twenty years old (fig. 4). That photo was taken in The Hague, where Vincent lived and worked, and intended as a gift for his father's birthday in February.¹¹ Even if there is a resemblance in facial expression, curly hair, mouth, and chin, the nineteen-year-old looks much sterner and mature. If this is the same person as the boy who had his portrait taken by Schwarz only a few years earlier, his features had changed dramatically in a very short time.

Is there another explanation? Hans Rooseboom, curator of photography at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, points out that it was not uncommon to reproduce photographs at a later moment (often by another photographer).¹² Yet no earlier example of this portrait is known, nor is there a reason to believe that Vincent required a younger portrait of himself during a visit to Brussels. If he had felt such a need, he could easily have done so in The Hague.¹³ Concluding that the boy in the portrait cannot be Vincent, who are we actually looking at? Given the subject's close resemblance, he is very likely a close relative.

The only known sibling who was a young adolescent between February 1870 and June 1873 and who did indeed reside for a time in Brussels, is Vincent's younger brother Theo. He arrived in the city on 6 January 1873 to work as an apprentice for the firm Goupil & Cie; he was fifteen years and eight months old at the time.¹⁴ Shortly after his arrival Theo received Vincent's letter from The Hague in which his brother wrote he had his portrait taken for their father's birthday; he would send Theo a copy as well (fig. 4). This may have prompted Theo to do likewise. On 17 March, Vincent wrote to him: 'I heard from Anna that you had your portrait taken. If you can spare another, I commend myself.' He added the following postscript: 'I just received your letter, for which I thank you. I'm very pleased with the portrait, it turned out well'¹⁵ Theo had sent a copy of his portrait both to his brother Vincent and their sister Anna.

When this letter was published in the 2009 edition of *Vincent van Gogh: The letters* it was unknown which portrait was referred to.¹⁶ But the answer now seems to present itself. Theo lived at 5 Place Sainte-Catherine, not far from the Galleries where Schwarz had his studio. To get to work every day at Goupil, located at 58 Rue Montagne de la Cour, one of the shortest and especially in winter most agreeable routes, was through the Passage Saint-Hubert. It is very likely that Theo visited Schwarz's studio shortly after he received Vincent's letter to have his own portrait made, and his photograph would be mistaken as an image of his brother for more than sixty years.¹⁷

Theo

A reasonable question is whether the person in the photograph genuinely resembles Theo, and also if or why the picture has not previously been linked with him. Fortunately, as mentioned earlier, several photographic portraits of Theo have survived (figs. 5-8). The brothers looked somewhat alike, as we know from various sources including Vincent himself who discussed their similarities and differences in both character and appearance in a letter from 1883 when he was in Drenthe. He compared them 'for reasons of physiognomy' with the Pilgrim Fathers, the resolute Puritans who set sail for America on the *Mayflower* in the early seventeenth century: 'certain red-headed folk with square foreheads [who] aren't thinkers alone nor men of action alone, but usually have both elements combined'.¹⁸ Vincent also spotted Theo's sharp facial features in a figure in a painting by George Henry Boughton while referring to his own appearance as a 'variation of the same physiognomy'.¹⁹ Theo's wife, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, thought that 'Theo was more tender and



⁵ Hermanus Jodocus Weesing, *Theo van Gogh, aged thirteen, 1870*, photograph, 10.1 x 6.2 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4785V/1962.

⁶ De Lavieter & Co. Den Haag, *Theo van Gogh, aged twenty-one, 1878*, photograph, 10.5 x 6.3 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4793V/1962.

kind [...], he was more delicately built and his features were more refined, but he had the same reddish fair complexion and the same light blue eyes, which sometimes darkened to a greenish-blue.²⁰ Theo once told her in a letter that Rodin's marble sculpture of the head of John the Baptist 'exactly resembles Vincent. [...] That expression of sorrow, that forehead disfigured by deep furrows [...] though his is somewhat more sloping' (fig. 9). Interestingly, when Jo later saw the sculpture herself, she thought it bore 'perfect resemblance to Theo'.²¹

The earliest known photographic portrait of Theo dates from 1870. Full-length and inscribed 'aged 13' ('oud 13 jaar'), it shows the youngster casually leaning on a table (fig. 5). The most striking features are his curls, slightly protruding ears, high forehead, and narrow jaw. The thick curls and the facial features closely resemble those of the slightly older boy in Schwarz's portrait, who otherwise has a more serious expression on his face. The small size of the full-length picture makes it harder to see Theo's pale eyes, but they are clearly visible in later photographic portraits as well as in the Schwarz portrait. Although Jo remembered the brothers having 'the same light blue eyes' she was mistaken, since Vincent's were darker and green blue, as seen in portraits painted by himself and Russell, and the photograph made when he was nineteen (fig. 4).²² Although black and white, the eyes are considerably darker than Theo's when viewed together with the photographic portrait of the latter (fig. 6). Comparison of the two portraits also shows that the facial expression, shape of the nose, and line of the mouth are similar, but more refined in Theo's case. His high and less sloping forehead is also noticeable. It is, in short, a 'variation of the

Ernest Ladrey, *Theo van Gogh*,
aged twenty-five, 1882,
photograph, 10.4 x 6.2,
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation),
inv. b4781V/1962.



same physiognomy', as Vincent put it. Theo's eyes are notably similar in the Schwarz portrait and in a photograph made when he was thirty two (fig. 3b and 8b), both from the same angle and under similar lighting conditions. While he is significantly older and with more facial hair (concealing the line of his mouth), the light eyes, the shape of the eyelids, the soft eyebrows, the high forehead, nose, and protruding ears indicate that the two photographs are portraits of one and the same person.

8a

Woodbury & Page, *Theo van Gogh*, aged *thirty-two*, 1889, photograph, 10.2 x 6.4 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4787V/1962.



High-resolution images of all known photographic portraits of Vincent and Theo were examined, followed by an additional facial feature comparison by forensic experts from the University of Amsterdam.²³ The following hypotheses were tested: (1) the photograph shows Theo van Gogh; (2) the photograph shows a person other than Theo van Gogh but with similar facial characteristics; (3) the photograph shows Vincent van Gogh; (4) the photograph shows a person other than Vincent van Gogh but with similar facial characteristics.



⁹
Auguste Rodin, *Severed head of Saint John the Baptist*, ca. 1887-1907, marble, 20.3 x 40 x 34.3 cm, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. AC1998.139.1.

The results indicate that hypothesis 1 has a higher probability than hypothesis 2, and that hypothesis 4 has a higher probability than hypothesis 3. Summarized, the report concludes: ‘The findings of the study, especially that of the morphology and characteristics of the individual facial elements in the images, are very much more probable if hypothesis 1 is correct than if hypothesis 3 is correct.’²⁴ In other words, this is Theo rather than Vincent van Gogh.

Provenance

The question remains as to why the person in the photograph has not previously been recognized as Theo. As noted earlier, the photographic portrait was not made public until after the Second World War. The photograph of the nineteen-year-old Vincent, on the other hand, was already published in the first edition of Van Gogh's letters (1914) by Jo van Gogh-Bonger as the only known photographic portrait of the artist (fig. 4).²⁵ This photograph was entrusted by her son Vincent Willem van Gogh to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation in 1962, and eventually became part of the collection of the Van Gogh Museum.²⁶ The two copies of the Schwarz photograph are in the same collection, but found their way there in different ways. The photograph with the inscription ‘B. Schwarz, Passage St. Hubert 27, Bruxelles’ was once part of a photo album that belonged to Theo himself, later also donated to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation in 1962 (fig. 2a).²⁷

The version without the inscription found its way to the Foundation via Vincent's eldest sister, Anna Cornelia van Houten-van Gogh (1855-1930) and subsequently her daughter and son-in-law (Johannes Paulus Scholte en Anna Scholte-van Houten) (fig. 3a).²⁸ This photograph made its debut in 1957 in an exhibition organized by Mark Edo Tralbaut at the Villa Hügel in Essen, for which the couple provided him with a variety of objects.



3b
Balduin Schwarz, *Theo van Gogh* (formerly identified as *Vincent van Gogh*, aged thirteen), detail, 1873, photograph, 9.7 x 5.9 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4783V/1989.

8b
Woodbury & Page, *Theo van Gogh*, aged thirty-two, detail, 1889, photograph, 10.2 x 6.4 cm, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), inv. b4787V/1962.

The catalogue describes the photograph as a 'Portrait of Vincent van Gogh (circa 1866)', further stating: 'The portrait has not so far been published nor exhibited. It comes from the family album of the deceased sisters Willemien and Anna van Gogh.'²⁹ Tralbaut believed that the photograph of the nineteen-year-old Van Gogh had been lost and was known only from the 1914 edition of the *Letters*, lending even greater prestige to his discovery of the youthful portrait.³⁰ Since Anna's descendants knew little about Van Gogh, it was evidently Tralbaut who was responsible for identifying the portrait as the thirteen-year-old Vincent.³¹

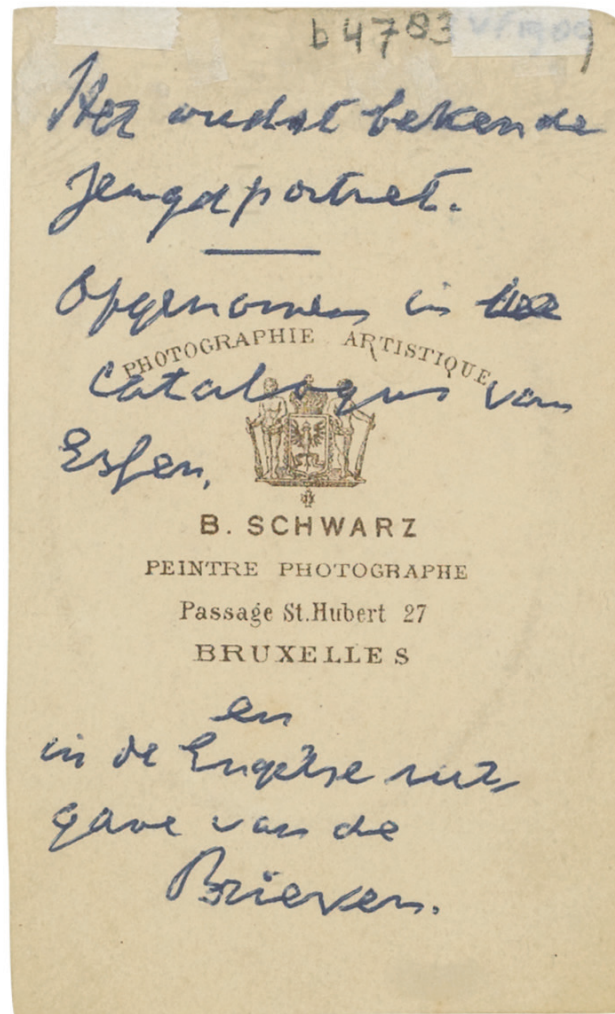
The back of the photograph reads 'The earliest known portrait as a youth. Published in the Essen catalogue and in the English edition of the *Letters*' (fig. 3c).³² The handwriting is that of J.P. Scholte, who lent the photograph to the exhibition in Essen. He also wrote 'V.W. van Gogh Brussel' on the front in the same ballpoint pen. The English edition of the *Letters* appeared in 1958 and showed the photo with the front annotation, which means Scholte annotated the photo around 1957.³³

The reverse of the other photograph, the one from Theo's album, is inscribed in blue ink by an unknown person: 'Vincent Willem or Theo v. Gogh?'. The latter has been crossed out in pencil and someone else added '± 19 years' (fig. 2b).³⁴ The correction to indicate that it is Vincent must have been made after 1957, based on Tralbaut's identification. Clearly, the person who had previously labelled the photograph in ink was uncertain about the subject's identity. While the later addition '± 19 jaar' deviates from Tralbaut's hypothesis, whoever made it evidently knew from the letters that Vincent had been in Brussels at the age of nineteen. They did not realize that a photograph of Vincent at that age was already known, in which he looked different.³⁵

Conclusion

Tralbaut's identification in 1957 of the thirteen-year-old Vincent van Gogh as the portrayed person, apparently did not result in doubt or further examination of the subject. However, Tralbaut – as the instigator of this 'identity crisis' – brought another artist to the fore. On 6 January 1958, he showed the photograph he had 'discovered' to Pablo Picasso, who responded: 'Such a remarkable resemblance to the young Rimbaud, especially

3c
Balduin Schwarz, *Theo van Gogh*
(formerly identified as *Vincent van Gogh*, aged thirteen), verso, 1873,
photograph, 9.7 x 5.9 cm,
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation),
inv. b4783V/1989.



the fiery piercing eyes!"³⁶ There is indeed a certain similarity with the young French poet Arthur Rimbaud, who now has the honor of being compared with Theo instead. Still another unexpected link can be drawn between the poet and the younger Van Gogh brother: in July 1873, six months after Theo arrived in Brussels, Rimbaud was shot in the same city, during a quarrel with his *amant* Paul Verlaine, who was subsequently sentenced to prison by the judge Théodore t'Serstevens. As chance would have it, the judge had his photograph taken by Balduin Schwarz, the very same photographer who had portrayed Theo van Gogh.³⁷

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NOTES

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thanks go to Bernard Bousmanne (Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, Brussels), Xavier Canonne (Musée de la Photographie, Charleroi) and Joseph Steven (FOMU, Antwerp) for their help in tracing Balduin Schwarz.

- 1 Van Gogh states in a letter to his sister Willemien from 16 and 20 June 1888 that his eyes were green, which is also the dominant colour in his self-portraits. See in this regard L. van Tilborgh and E. Hendriks, *Vincent van Gogh: Paintings 2: Antwerp & Paris, 1885–1888*, Amsterdam/Zwolle 2009, p. 445. For the letter see L. Jansen, H. Luijten and N. Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh: The letters*, 6 vols, London 2009, letter 626, pp. 128–32. The digital edition of the complete correspondence is www.vangoghletters.org.
- 2 A.S. Hartrick, *A painter's pilgrimage through fifty years*, London 1934, p. 42. In 1887, not long afterwards, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec drew a pastel portrait of Van Gogh with a glass of absinthe, which is notable for the subject's sharp profile and slightly tense posture (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, inv. do693V1962). When Theo's wife Jo van Gogh-Bonger first met Vincent in May 1890, she spotted a resemblance with the artist's self-portrait from Paris, *Self-portrait as a painter* (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, inv. so022V/1962), see Van Tilborgh and Hendriks 2009 (note 1), p. 522.
- 3 The only known photograph of Vincent van Gogh during his French period shows him sitting opposite Emile Bernard in Asnières on the Seine quayside, but he is seen only from the rear. Various other photographs supposedly including Van Gogh have cropped up in recent years, but unfortunately none of these has been remotely able to persuade us. A more comprehensive essay on this subject by Teio Meedendorp is in preparation.
- 4 Letter 685, Jansen, Luijten and Bakker 2009 (note 1).
- 5 This does not include the group photograph of his high-school class in Tilburg in 1867, when he was fourteen, see H.F.J.M. van den Eerenbeemt, 'The unknown Vincent van Gogh, 1866–68: The secondary state school at Tilburg', *Vincent: Bulletin of the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh* 2 (1972/73) nr 1, pp. 2–12; nr 2, pp. 2–10.
- 6 J. Joyce, *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, New York 1916. The photograph was first published in M.E. Tralbaut, *Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890): Leben und Schaffen: Dokumentation Gemälde Zeichnungen*, Essen 1957, cat 68, unpag.
- 7 *Fotostudio De Jong*, VPRO, broadcast 18–01–2014. The focus of the program was on a supposed photographic portrait of Van Gogh at a later age, with comparison of the two youthful portraits leading to a chance discovery.
- 8 Vincent might, for instance, have visited his uncle 'Hein' (Hendrik Vincent van Gogh 1814–1877) who established an art gallery in Brussels in 1862, which was taken over by Goupil & Cie in 1872. See Jansen, Luijten and Bakker 2009 (note 1), vol 6, p. 78.
- 9 S. F. Joseph, T. Schwilden and M.-C. Claes, *Directory of photographers in Belgium (1839–1905)*, vol 1, Antwerp 1997, p. 348.
- 10 As successor to Frédéric Trablé. This operated until 6 January 1883, following which Schwarz's trail in Brussels is lost. See note 9.
- 11 See his letter from mid-January 1873, in which he writes as follows to his brother, who also received a print: 'The next time I write I'll send you my portrait; I had it taken last Sunday.' This means the portrait was very likely taken on 12 January; and Letter 4 from 28 January: 'Herewith my portrait, but don't say anything about it when you write home. As you know, it's for Pa's birthday.' Their father turned fifty-one on 8 February. See Jansen e.a. 2009 (note 1), letter 3, p. 23.
- 12 Oral communication 03–2014.
- 13 In general, one would expect a greater age difference than five years when having reproductions made after earlier childhood images.
- 14 Theo was born on 1 May 1857. He was transferred to the branch in The Hague in autumn 1873, replacing Vincent who was given a post at Goupil's London branch. For Theo van Gogh, see C. Stolwijk and R. Thomson, *Theo van Gogh 1857–1891: Art dealer, collector and brother of Vincent*, Amsterdam/Zwolle 1999; L. Jansen and J. Robert (eds.), *Brief happiness: The correspondence of Theo van Gogh and Jo Bongher*, Amsterdam/Zwolle 1999.
- 15 Jansen e.a. 2009 (note 1), letter 5, p. 25. See also note 11.
- 16 Jansen e.a. 2009 (note 1), letter 5, n4, p. 25.
- 17 In a letter to Theo dated 19–02–1873, his father wrote that he had sent Theo's portrait to Anna who was very much looking forward to it (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, inv. b2604V/1982). This may imply that Anna had already seen the portrait while celebrating their father's birthday around 8 February, and hence that Theo, like Vincent, had his portrait made especially for that occasion. See Jansen e.a. 2009 (note 1), letter 5, p. 25.
- 18 Jansen e.a. 2009 (note 1), letter 405, p. 63.
- 19 See Jansen e.a. 2009 (note 1), letter 405, n 3, p. 63, for the identification of the figure in Boughton's painting.
- 20 J. van Gogh-Bonger, 'Memoir of Vincent van Gogh', in V.W. van Gogh (ed.), *The complete letters of Vincent van Gogh*, Greenwich, CT 1958, vol 1.
- 21 See note 20. Theo mentioned Rodin's sculpture – which figured in an exhibition in his gallery on Boulevard Montmartre early 1889 – in a letter to Jo dated 09–02–1889, see Jansen and Robert 1999 (note 14), pp. 145–49; Stolwijk and Thomson 1999 (note 14), p. 48.
- 22 See also Van Tilborgh and Hendriks 2009 (note 1) for an overview of this.
- 23 The method is set out in the technical guide ('vakbijlage') on facial comparison, see forensischinstituut.nl/over-het-nfi/vakbijlagen-informatiebladen. The report was drawn up on 24–09–2018 by Prof. Zeno Geradts.
- 24 Expressed numerically, the magnitude of the evidential value is 10,000–1,000,000; the only higher evidential value is 'extremely much more probable'; or >1,000,000 in numerical terms, according to the report (see note 23).
- 25 J. van Gogh-Bonger (ed.), *Vincent van Gogh: Brieven aan zijn broeder*, Amsterdam/Antwerpen 1914, p. 4.
- 26 Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, inv. b4785V/1962.
- 27 Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, inv. b4417V/1962. The album, which was later dismantled, contained fifty-three photographs, not only of various family members, but also a number of artists, including Jacob Maris and Hendrik Willem Mesdag, whose work was sold by Goupil & Cie.
- 28 Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, inv. b4783V/1989. The photograph was registered at the Van Gogh Museum in 1989 as a loan from the foundation, but had already been acquired prior to that from Anna's descendants, almost certainly by Vincent Willem van Gogh (1890–1978).
- 29 'Das Porträt wurde bisher noch niemals publiziert oder ausgestellt. Es stammt aus dem Familienalbum

- der verstorbenen Schwestern Wilhelmen [sic] und Anna van Gogh; Tralbaut 1957 (note 6), cat 68, unpag. Tralbaut later remembered things a little differently and Willemien disappeared from the provenance; see M.E. Tralbaut, *Van Gogh: Le mal aimé*, Lausanne 1969, p. 20. What is surprising about the exhibition is that Vincent Willem van Gogh does not appear to have collaborated on it. All the original art objects and documents came from other collections, with only photographs of artworks and documents displayed from his collection. The Scholte-van Houtens provided most of the family photographs.
- 30 Tralbaut 1957 (note 6), cat 80, unpag. Although the original was in the possession of Vincent Willem van Gogh, a reproduction of the photograph from the edition of the letters was shown in the exhibition.
- 31 It is evident from correspondence between Anna and Vincent Willem van Gogh that they did not know a great deal about Vincent at that point.
- 32 'Het oudst bekende jeugdportret. Opgenomen in de catalogus van Essen en in de Engelse uitgave van de Brieven.'
- 33 Van Gogh-Bonger 1958 (note 20), p. xxi.
- 34 The handwriting does not resemble that of Jo van Gogh-Bonger or her son, or that of other people close to her, such as her brother Andries Bonger or her second husband Johan Cohen Gosschalk.
- The authors are grateful to Hans Luijten and Roelie Zwikker in this regard.
- 35 It should be noted that the age placed on the portrait has also varied, although Jo van Gogh-Bonger correctly reproduced it in 1914 alongside the relevant letters from January 1873, see Van Gogh-Bonger 1914 (note 25), p. 4. Vincent visited the triennial Brussels Salon in the summer of 1872, see Jansen e.a. 2009 (note 1), letter 4, p. 24.
- 36 'Quelle ressemblance frappante avec le jeune Rimbaud, surtout dans les yeux ardents et pénétrants!', Tralbaut 1969 (note 29), p. 20.
- 37 B. Bousmanne, *Verlaine en Belgique: Cellule 252: Turbulences poétiques*, Brussels 2015, p. 50.

SUMMARY

A photographic portrait that was generally accepted to be an image of a thirteen year old Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), now appears to be that of his brother Theo (1857-1891) at the age of fifteen. It was identified as a young Vincent by Mark Edo Tralbaut in 1957, when he presented the image for the first time at an exhibition. First doubts about the identity of the portrayed appeared in 2014. Subsequent research learned that the photograph, which was taken in Brussels by Balduin Schwarz, could not be a thirteen year old Vincent, because Schwarz only came to Brussels in 1870 when Vincent was already seventeen years old, and the person in the image certainly appears to be younger. Theo moved to Brussels in January 1873 to work in the art gallery Goupil & Cie, and is known to have had his portrait taken there shortly after arrival. From various sources it is known that the brothers shared common facial features, and although comparison with the only 'other' known photo portrait of Vincent, when he was 19 years old, does show some likeness with the Schwarz photograph, other images of Theo proved to be far more convincing when placed next to it. This was corroborated by research carried out by forensic specialists.