

Van

Gogh's

Portrait

of

Joseph

Roulin

August

1888



The Materials: The original portrait was done on a paper sized 12 1/2 by 9 5/8 inches. The medium was ink with reed pen and quill pen. I used charcoal and Bristol vellum paper for the sketch. For the detailed portion I used a reed pen, a fountain pen, and ink on Scaevone 500 weight charcoal paper.



The Subject: The prisoner was a personal friend of Vincent Van Gogh. Joseph Roulin first posed for this portrait in the summer of 1888. Van Gogh painted several portraits and drew several sketches of the same pose from the original painting. During this time, Van Gogh's mental state became increasingly unstable and he was committed at the psychiatric hospital in Arles. His friend, Joseph Roulin, remained by his side and helped him during his stay.

The Movement: Van Gogh is one of the most famous names in the Post-Impressionism movement. When sketching Joseph Roulin's portrait, Van Gogh was developing an idea of a "modern portrait." This new way of capturing people depended less on the detailed physical characteristics of the person and their pose, and more from remembering their character and exploring the effects of line and color.

The Process: Van Gogh used the reed pen primarily to make the bold cross-hatching in the coat, the layered lines on the hat, and the rounded and bumpy marks making the lockstone of the beard. The rest was done with the quill pen to make parallel marks and cross-hatchings. Most of the lines are straight, but placed in a series of angles to create a curved effect. In the original, they are strategically placed on the left side of the face, and the groups of hatchings in the background are smaller and denser to indicate that the light is coming from the opposite side.



Christian Thoms
Art 20

The Violin

The purpose of The Violin was to serve as a study for the violinist in one of his paintings, *The Absorbent*. He would often attend rehearsals of the orchestra of the Paris Opéra and sketch the musicians as they practiced. This is one of several studies of violinists that he sketched at this time.

The date at which this was drawn was around 1870. At this time, the Impressionist movement was under way, and Edgar Degas was one of the originators. This movement was known by its preference of the upper middle class in time of leisure. The paintings themselves had a soft, hazy quality that emphasized color and light. (Although women were popular subjects, but Degas preferred to paint male scenes from the opera.)

The sketch was done on a 14 1/2" x 11 1/2" piece of blue-grey paper. He used charcoal for the sketch and white for the highlights on the face and violin. Since this was only to be a study for a painting, Degas used materials that were easy to use. Charcoal was useful for making quick changes in line thickness and value, allowing him to create accurate sketches of his subject matter.

The form of the violin is defined using darker lines to create areas and lighter lines to define its length and width. The marks used to create value in this sketch are achieved in this manner: mostly going diagonally upwards from left to right. Though the lines are continuous, he still managed to create a wide range of values in the sketch. Emphasis is brought on the face and violin in this study by using more accurate shading and white to highlight the subject.

