

# NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## *Norton Simon Museum Presents an Installation of Vincent van Gogh's 'Bedroom' on Loan From the Art Institute of Chicago*

This iconic interior, the second of three versions, arrives on the West Coast for the first time  
Dec. 9, 2016–March 6, 2017

**Pasadena, CA**—The Norton Simon Museum presents an installation of Vincent van Gogh's tender and intimate *Bedroom* from 1889, a highlight of the Art Institute of Chicago's superb 19<sup>th</sup>-century collection. A meditation on friendship, hope and crushing disappointment, Van Gogh's *Bedroom* serves not only as a kind of self-portrait, but also as a symbol of the artist's wandering existence and search for an elusive sense of repose. The second of three versions of the interior scene, the Chicago *Bedroom* was painted by the artist while at the asylum of Saint-Paul-de-Mausole at Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, in September 1889. Its installation at the Norton Simon Museum marks the first time the painting has been on view on the West Coast, and it will hang in the Museum's 19<sup>th</sup>-century art wing, surrounded by the Simon's own important collection of Van Gogh works, from Dec. 9, 2016 through March 6, 2017.



Vincent van Gogh. *The Bedroom*, 1889. The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection.

Says Museum President Walter Timoshuk, "The Norton Simon Museum is delighted to feature Van Gogh's mesmerizing masterpiece in our galleries this winter, and we are grateful to President James Rondeau, to Chair of European Painting and Sculpture Gloria Groom, and to the board of Trustees

at the Art Institute of Chicago for making this exceptional exchange possible.” Adds James Rondeau, President and Eloise W. Martin Director at the Art Institute of Chicago, “Our recent exhibition featuring Van Gogh’s *Bedroom* reaffirmed what we have long believed about the power of this beloved picture to remain relevant and resonant to new generations of audiences. We hope the Southern California community will enjoy the opportunity to see Van Gogh’s *Bedroom*, which has been a star in our permanent collection for nearly 100 years.”

### **About Van Gogh’s Bedroom**

In his brief life (just 37 years), Van Gogh sought a place to call home in four countries and 37 residences. In only one of these did he find something approaching contentment: his leased rooms at No. 2 Place Lamartine in Arles, the so-called “Yellow House,” where he dreamed of establishing a “Studio of the South.” He painted his bedroom in situ for the first time in autumn 1888 (a picture today in the Van Gogh Museum), having spent two days confined to his bed by a fit of exhaustion. In an Oct. 16 letter to his brother, Theo, he explained:

I had a new idea in mind... This time it’s simply my bedroom, but the color has to do the job here, and through its being simplified by giving a grander style to things, to be suggestive here *of rest* or *of sleep* in general. In short, looking at the painting should *rest* the mind, or rather, the imagination. The walls are of a pale violet. The floor — is of red tiles. The bedstead and the chairs are fresh butter yellow...

(16 October 1888. Van Gogh Museum, *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, No. 704).

The artist’s specific interest here in the decoration of his home betrayed nervous excitement in anticipation of Paul Gauguin’s arrival the following week. Already Van Gogh’s friend, competitor and artistic idol, Gauguin was to be his collaborator at last, to live and work by his side in the Yellow House. The violet walls, the butter yellow chairs and bedstead, the selection of portraits on the wall in the bedroom: these were all carefully chosen with Gauguin’s future residence in the adjacent room in mind.

The dream of a shared Studio of the South, however, proved short-lived, descending before the year was out into a nightmare, when Van Gogh experienced a nervous breakdown in late December and presented a severed portion of his own ear to a local prostitute. In and out of the hospital at Arles through the spring of 1889, Van Gogh admitted himself to the asylum of Saint-Paul-de-Mausole at Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in early May. It was there, the following September, that he undertook the second and third versions of his *Bedroom*, today in the Art Institute of Chicago and the Musée d’Orsay, respectively. Both were adapted from the original canvas, which had sustained

serious water damage in a flood at Arles. As he copied the damaged *Bedroom* in his asylum studio at Saint-Rémy, the hopeful moment that picture had once captured must have seemed to Van Gogh far away. Yet the second version—the Chicago picture—is, if anything, more startlingly vivid than its predecessor, its colors more vigorously contrasted, its surface more thickly covered in paint. Hoped for, lost, and longingly remembered, the peaceful scene here rematerializes with the intensity of a fever dream.

*Van Gogh's 'Bedroom' on Loan From the Art Institute of Chicago* is organized by Chief Curator Carol Togneri. The painting's installation at the Norton Simon Museum comes shortly after the Art Institute's revelatory exhibition "Van Gogh's Bedrooms" (Feb. 14–May 10, 2016), which brought together all three versions of the interior and presented new research on the works. That exhibition's curator, Gloria Groom, chair of European Painting and Sculpture and the David and Mary Winton Green Curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, will present a lecture on Van Gogh and his 'Bedrooms' at the Norton Simon Museum. Information about additional events, including a lecture by Van Gogh Museum Director Axel Rüger, will be made available this fall.

#### *Van Gogh and His Bedrooms*

Gloria Groom, Chair of European Painting and Sculpture and the David and Mary Winton Green Curator at the Art Institute of Chicago

Saturday, Jan. 7, 2017, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

#### **About the Norton Simon Museum**

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

**Location:** The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit [www.nortonsimon.org](http://www.nortonsimon.org). **Hours:** The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors. Members, students with

I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) for schedules.

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