

Phantom of the Road

SAMUEL FARRIER

February 15 – April 5, 2025



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In 1930 a typeset book was published in Bruxelles in an edition of 850. This volume titled *Le Faux Van Gogh* detailed known 'fake' Van Gogh's of the time. Dimensions and descriptions are supported by a mass of black and white plates juxtaposing images of these 'fakes' with their 'original' counterparts.

Years ago while in Antwerp I splurged on a copy of my own having encountered it floors up in an old book shop locked behind the loose tracked sliding glass of a vitrine. There it was, central, aged olive green with aubergine cover text, winged by a very old copy of Vico's *Scienza Nuova* (The New Science) and a well-loved title on vanitas of the Dutch baroque. Thumbing through the mold speckled pages of *Le Faux Van Gogh*, I can't help but giggle at the notion of indexing falsity.

Van Gogh was not only copied but he copied. Some unusual examples are his three canvases in oil depicting enlarged compositions of Eisen and Hiroshige ukiyo-e wood blocks from the floating world in Edo Japan.

In his famed series, the sunflowers of Arles, he copied compositions of his own. A pair was painted in 1888 to hang above Gauguin's bed during his stay in the yellow house. Of the seven in this series, two are initial studies. The remaining five consist of only two compositions. Today you can see Van Gogh's 'original' painting *Sunflowers* hanging in London's National Gallery, or you can go see *Sunflowers* in Amsterdam's Van Gogh museum or should you be in Tokyo you can find Van Gogh's 'original' painting *Sunflowers* at the Sompō Museum of Art.

The latter is frequently cited as faux though I don't think it much matters. Sompō Japan Insurance Inc. purchased it from Christie's London in 1987 for just shy of 40 million dollars and the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam currently lists Sompō Japan Insurance inc. as a founding partner for its recent patronage in the realization of a new entrance hall.

All of these *Sunflowers* are done in an early synthetic pigment, known as chrome yellow which has a tendency to darken with exposure to light. Fascinatingly, when you stand in front of Van Gogh's 'original' painting *Sunflowers* in London, Amsterdam or Tokyo you witness a dignified shade I would liken to French Ochre not the hot and hectic synthetic chrome yellow as it was freshly painted in La Belle Époque.

This evanescence of the synthetic is of perineal interest when reviewing artwork that blossomed in the eras of Impressionism - Post and really, ever since. Given time our relationship to the synthetic has only deepened and now that the cork is popped, synthesis flows whether one thirsts for it or not.

This phenomenon is familiar today in the sun bleaching of plastic bags, aging of paints, the micro plastics in your liver and a mounting confidence that the world is no longer encountered, discovered or unwrapped but hurriedly invented.

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Advancements are made and time trundles on.

Atop a small mountain in Southern California, on view at The Getty Center in Los Angeles is Ultra-violet: New Light on Van Gogh's *Iris*. This exposé of one 'original' painting and a copy of it inspired by its 'original' appearance investigates Van Gogh's use of the fugitive pigment geranium lake.

X-ray fluorescence (XRF) images show the blooms, close up, in nearly inverted color like a limber deer through the night vision crosshairs of a squinted site.

Given a century + to bathe in the sun, an effervescent lake of geranium evaporates and the blossoms once violet are now blue. Shortly after my visit last December, the internal threat that material composition holds to immutability was rivaled by the near Pompeiian instability of the external.

I am told that Painting is a plastic art, which is characterized by the practice of applying paint, pigment, color or other medium to a solid matrix.

Painted representations frequently outlive their subjects. The hardened oil eternally in bloom. These warped phantoms mirroring what once was, a copy of something, sometime, somewhere.

It would seem that if vanitas was for the living and Edo was floating, surely, we are painted.

Samuel Farrier (b. 1989), is a New York based artist and founder of The New York Board of Taste, a contextual archive in lower Manhattan specializing in unlikely collaborations and small publishing.

Farrier has been an artist in residence at The Elizabeth Foundation, New York (2017). Las Huertas, Cortez, CO (2019) and L'apartmento, Naples Italy (2022). Select group shows include: (Maria VMier) *No: tongue breaks and thin fire is racing under skin*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich Germany 2024. *The Flower Thief*, The Meeting, New York, 2024. *Fixture, Soloway*, Brooklyn, 2023. *Mura Bellini*, Taschino, Naples Italy, 2022. *Rubus Armeniacus*, Jessica's Place, New York, 2019. *Superhuman*, Fisher Parish, New York, 2018. *Hectare*, Demain, Paris, France, 2018. *36 hours*, Particulier, New York, 2017.

CHECKLIST

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1. *Phantom of the Road (Painter on the Way to Work)*, 2025

polyethylene on panel
artist frame of carved, gilt wood
26.5 x 28.5 inches

2. *The Koyata Six (Sunflowers Again)*, 2025

polyethylene on panel
artist frame of ebonized wood
32.5 x 38.5 inches

3. *Second Sun*, 2025

oil on linen
12 x 16 inches

4. *Breathing Roots*, 2025

polyethylene on linen
artist frame of ebonized wood
33 x 54 inches

5. *Scheme 6,6' (Irises)*, 2025

polyethylene on panel
artist frame of walnut
28 x 35.5 inches

6. *Twin Flame*, 2025

polyethylene on panel
25 x 35 inches

7. *Twin Flame 2*, 2025

oil on linen
25 x 35 inches

8. *Skeletons on Horseback*, 2025

oil, asphaltum, polyethylene and linen on linen
5 x 9 inches

9. *Hand with Purr (Nuenen)*, 2025

oil, asphaltum, and polyethylene on linen
12 x 5 ½ inches

10. *Sunflower (After Holst) OE 1*, 2025

relief on found paper in polypropylene sleeve
9.5 x 12.5 inches

11. *Sunflower (After Holst) OE 2*, 2025

relief on found paper in polypropylene sleeve
9.5 x 12.5 inches

12. *Sunflower (After Holst) OE 3*, 2025

relief on found paper in polypropylene sleeve
9.5 x 12.5 inches

13. *Sunflower (After Holst) OE 4*, 2025

relief on found paper in polypropylene sleeve
9.5 x 12.5 inches

14. *Sunflower (After Holst) OE 5*, 2025

relief on found paper in polypropylene sleeve
9.5 x 12.5 inches

15. *Sunflower (After Holst) OE 6*, 2025

relief on found paper in polypropylene sleeve
9.5 x 12.5 inches

16. *Sunflower (After Holst) OE 7*, 2025

relief on found paper in polypropylene sleeve
9.5 x 12.5 inches