

CREATIVITY AND MADNESS IN THE ARTISTIC PRODUCTION OF VINCENT VAN GOGH: BRIEF PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to show how painting, in Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), is an active expression of the Dutch painter's madness, inner anxieties and social unease through the vigour of the sign and the brutal incandescence of colour. The pictorial material is a direct manifestation of the inner datum and becomes a means of exorcising the 'evil of living' that consumed the artist. Within this work, we will consider how in the works of Van Gogh, forerunner of the expressionist language, creativity and madness coexist simultaneously. In his aesthetic operations, in fact, those unconscious processes emerge that are expressed through creative action. This study aims to demonstrate how, however, the state of madness manifested by the painter can lead, through logical processes, to the birth and production of creative objects. At the same time, however, the madness, linked to psychopathology, will result in a self-aggressive energy, negatively influencing his psyche, leading him into a depressive condition and subsequently to death. The present work, therefore, consists of a careful psychological analysis of the Dutch painter's creative and at the same time destructive thinking, which led him to create works that would gradually reflect his state of mind and accompany him towards his end through increasingly textured and swirling brushstrokes.

Keywords: Vincent Van Gogh, Creativity, Madness, Psychology, Art

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to offer the reader a psychological analysis of the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh and how creativity and madness can coexist in him at the same time. This idea, inaugurated by Aristotle, found its greatest development in the Romantic era (see also the criticisms made by the scholar Cesare Lombroso in the second half of the 19th century, as in his 1872 work *Genius and Madness*) [11]. However, it is of fundamental importance to emphasise the difference between creativity and psychopathology. Mental illness, in fact, does not lead to something creative, or reveal something about reality, it is rather an incomprehensible and incommunicable phenomenon [16]. Psychotic crises and the state of madness lead to the consumption and destruction of the artist through a wandering life in opposition to established thought and bourgeois conformism, always living in a precarious balance [10]. However, it is precisely the destructive impulse that is generative of a creative and productive force of the unconscious that cannot disregard the possibility of finding a form even when the force