

Celebrating 10 years of the TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund

TEFAF supports the conservation of work by Vincent van Gogh in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen collection



Poplars near Nuenen (1885), Vincent van Gogh, flanked by X-ray images, showing the over-painted compositions, in the restoration studios at Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen.

Credit: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, photo by Aad Hoogendoorn.

Amsterdam (April 19, 2022) – The European Fine Art Foundation ([TEFAF](https://www.tefaf.com)) has announced that the **Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen** in Rotterdam is to be a recipient of the TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund, a grant program created 10 years ago in support of the international art community's vital work to preserve artistic and cultural heritage. The work being restored is *Populierenlaan bij Nuenen* (*Poplars near Nuenen*), 1885, oil on canvas, 78 x 98 cm, by Vincent van Gogh.

To celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the TEFAF's Museum Restoration Fund, for the first time ever, the recipient's work of art will be shown, pre-restoration, at TEFAF Maastricht during the run of the fair. A dedicated space at the fair will be designed to showcase this work by Van Gogh. Later in summer 2022, the restoration project will start at the Boijmans Depot, where visitors are able to follow the restoration project.

The TMRF 10th Anniversary celebrations, including the presentation of the Van Gogh at the Maastricht fair and dedicated TEFAF Talks in collaboration with ICOM-CC, are supported by Aon, the TMRF Anniversary Supporting Partner.

Populierenlaan bij Nuenen (Poplars Near Nuenen)

In 1903, the painting *Populierenlaan bij Nuenen (Poplars near Nuenen)*, 1885, oil on canvas, 78 x 98 cm, by Vincent van Gogh was the first work by the artist to enter a public museum collection. It was donated by 26 art friends of the Museum. Van Gogh painted the work in Nuenen in 1885 and is believed to have added further touches of paint to the work in Paris, giving the work an important place in the artist's oeuvre.

After almost 140 years the work is in need of restoration. The paint layers are unstable, an issue partly caused because Van Gogh painted the work on top of another painting, which has caused problems with adhesion. As such the restoration process will focus on consolidating the loose paint and possibly removing the varnish.

The restoration process

The process is being led and overseen by painter conservator Erika Smeenk-Metz. Currently the museum is conducting technical research into the materials used working in partnership with specialists from the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed (Cultural Heritage Agency) and the Van Gogh Museum. The central question is whether the varnish can be removed without damaging the original paint layers, which would improve the aesthetics of the painting. It will also allow for further investigation into the painting underneath the visible *Populierenlaan bij Nuenen* – depicted underneath is a tower, presumed to be the Old Tower near Nuenen. By exploring these layers further, it is hoped to provide the first technical evidence that the lighter touches were added by Van Gogh after he took the painting with him to Paris.

Never before has research been possible in such depth and the museum hopes to discover beyond doubt how much of the painting was done in Paris, thus placing the work in a new light within Van Gogh's stylistic development as an artist.

Sjarel Ex, Director Boijmans Van Beuningen, said *"In addition to a new typology, Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen also offers a new instrument for caring for the extensive and diverse collection in Rotterdam. We are delighted with the support from TEFAF and extremely grateful that The Museum Restoration Fund puts the care for art and heritage worldwide in the spotlight and has been for a decade. As a place for conservation and research, the depot is ideally suited to offer this masterpiece the restoration it deserves."*

Over its 170-year history, the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen has grown to include over 150,000 artefacts – 63,000 paintings, photographs, films, pre-industrial design and design objects, contemporary art installations and sculptures, as well as 88,000 prints and drawings. The collection offers a journey through the history of art, from the Middle Ages to the 21st century.

Hide van Seggelen, Chairman of TEFAF commented, "The establishment of TEFAF's Museum Restoration Fund has provided valuable investment into the preservation of important works of art around the world, reinforcing TEFAF's commitment to scholarship and academia. It is befitting that, in this anniversary year, the fund has chosen to support the

restoration of a Dutch masterpiece by one of the world's best-known artists thereby preserving it for future generations of visitors to the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.”

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, the TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund supports the restoration and conservation of culturally significant works in museums and institutions worldwide. Museums and institutions that have attended TEFAF Maastricht or TEFAF New York are eligible to apply for the grants, which are awarded by an independent committee of experts.

The restoration fund's committee is made up of the following international experts:

- **Rachel Kaminsky**, a private art dealer from New York and former head of the Old Master paintings department at Christie's, New York
- **Dr. Kenson Kwok**, founder and former Director of the Asian Civilizations Museum and the Peranakan Museum in Singapore
- **Carol Pottasch**, a senior restorer, and conservator from the Mauritshuis, The Hague
- **Dr. Ashok Roy**, museum scientist and leading international expert on the materials and techniques of European Old Master Paintings
- **Sir Nicholas Penny**, art historian, author, former curator and former Director of the National Gallery, London

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM RESTORATION FUND

The TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund was established in 2012 to support and promote professional restoration and related scholarly research of significant museum artworks. Championing art in all its forms, applications for its grants are open to museums from all over the world and artworks from any age. Each year, a maximum of €50,000 will be allocated to projects. The committee of independent experts usually selects two winners to each receive a maximum of €25,000 to support their restoration project.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM BOIJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen is a versatile and distinctive museum in the heart of the port city of Rotterdam. It is the only collection in The Netherlands with a wide-enough scope to allow the visitor to browse through Western art history from the Middle Ages to the present.

The museum has kept strong ties with collectors from its inception (1849), taking its name from two important collectors: Frans Boijmans and Daniël George van Beuningen. It credits its eclectic collection to more than 1,700 private collectors. This also applies to the extraordinary and beautiful sub-collection of nineteenth-century paintings and works on paper, especially in the field of impressionism. The collection of impressionist works includes masterpieces by leading artists such as Monet, Cézanne, Pissarro, Renoir and Degas, supplemented by Dutch Masters such as Breitner and Van Gogh, including his 'Poplars near Nuenen' and 'Portrait of Armand Roulin'.

Thanks to the large-scale renovation of the museum, it is possible to have sub-collections travel to fellow institutions in the Netherlands and abroad. And in the meantime, Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen is now officially open to the public. It is the world's first publicly accessible museum depot. The depot is a working building: artworks are cleaned, preserved,

restored, packed, unpacked, transported and more. The depot offers visitors a glimpse behind the scenes of the museum world and shows the care and maintenance of an art collection containing more than 151,000 works of art.

ABOUT TEFAF

TEFAF is a not-for-profit foundation that champions expertise and diversity in the global art community, evidenced in the exhibitors selected for its two fairs, which take place annually in Maastricht and New York. TEFAF acts as an expert guide for both private and institutional collectors, which inspires lovers and buyers of art everywhere.

TEFAF New York will be held in the Park Avenue Armory from May 6 – 10, 2022. May 5 by invitation only.

TEFAF Maastricht will be held in the MECC Maastricht from June 25-30, 2022. June 24 and until 2 PM on June 25 by invitation only.

ABOUT TEFAF MAASTRICHT

TEFAF Maastricht is widely regarded as the world's premier fair for fine art, antiques, and design and is a showcase for the finest art works currently on the market. Alongside the traditional areas of Old Master paintings, antiques, and classical antiquities that cover half of the fair, you can also find modern and contemporary art, photography, jewelry, 20th century design, and works on paper.

ABOUT TEFAF NEW YORK

TEFAF New York was founded in early 2016, originally as two annual art fairs in New York at the Park Avenue Armory – TEFAF New York Fall and TEFAF New York Spring. Today, TEFAF New York is one singular, annual fair that encapsulates modern and contemporary art, jewelry, antiques, and design, featuring around 90 leading exhibitors from around the globe. Tom Postma Design, celebrated for its innovative work with leading museums, galleries, and art fairs, has developed designs for the fairs that interplay with the spectacular spaces while giving them a lighter, contemporary look and feel. Exhibitor stands will flow throughout the Armory's landmark building encompassing the Wade Thompson Drill Hall and extending to both the first and second floors of the Armory's period rooms, creating a fair of unprecedented depth and impact in New York City.

ABOUT AXA XL

TEFAF and AXA XL, its Lead Partner for TEFAF Maastricht, share the view that there's more to art than meets the eye.

AXA XL, the property & casualty and specialty risk division of AXA, provides insurance and risk management products and services for mid-sized companies through to large multinationals, and reinsurance solutions to insurance companies globally. We partner with those who move the world forward. To learn more, visit www.axaxl.com.

FOR EDITORS: Additional images of the Van Gogh can be found [here](#).

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