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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Van Gogh Museum to keep Sunflowers in Amsterdam

amsterdam, 14.02.2019 [ENA]

Detailed international research underscores fragile condition of famous painting.

Research conducted at the Van Gogh Museum into Vincent van Gogh's famous Sunflowers has produced a great deal of new information regarding the condition of the painting and the materials that Van Gogh used. One of the conclusions is that the painting is stable, but fragile. Axel Rüger, Director of the Van Gogh Museum: 'This is why we

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Research conducted at the Van Gogh Museum into Vincent van Gogh's famous Sunflowers has produced a great deal of new information regarding the condition of the painting and the materials that Van Gogh used. One of the conclusions is that the painting is stable, but fragile. Axel Rüger, Director of the Van Gogh Museum: 'This is why we

have decided that Sunflowers will no longer travel away from the museum. From now on, this highlight of our collection will stay at home in Amsterdam, available for all of our visitors to see every day of the year'. Sunflowers has been in the museum's conservation studio since 11 January while minor conservation treatment is carried out. This is the final phase of comprehensive research into the condition of the painting. An international team of specialists studied Sunflowers in Amsterdam using the latest techniques, in order to gather as much information as possible about the canvas, the layers of ground and paint, and the earlier restorations carried out on the work. The aim was to ascertain which materials Van Gogh used, what the condition of the painting is, whether restoration is required and possible, and what can be done to preserve the painting for future generations in the best possible manner.

No more travels

The research has established the current condition of the painting and what, 130 years after the work was created, needs to be done to preserve it for future generations. Rüger: 'One notable conclusion of the research is that the layers of ground and paint are stable, but very sensitive to vibrations and changes in humidity and temperature. It is therefore important that the painting is moved about as little as possible, and that it is displayed in a stable climate. In order to avoid any risk whatsoever, we have decided that

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Sunflowers will no longer

longer travel'. The masterpiece was already only very rarely loaned out – only six times in the museum's 46-year history. The last time was in 2014, when the painting travelled to The National Gallery in London to go on display alongside the version of Sunflowers from that collection. The two versions had previously been on display at the Van Gogh Museum.

International team of experts

The research began in 2016, headed by former senior conservator Ella Hendriks (now Professor of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam), in collaboration with experts from the universities of Antwerp, Perugia and Torun (Poland) and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. Sunflowers was examined using

the latest research techniques, meaning that the painting no longer had to travel to be investigated. Instead, mobile devices were brought from different places to study the painting on-site at the museum. The use of this so called MOLAB platform was made possible by the financial support of the Horizon 2020 program of the EU, through the IPERION CH project. The research has resulted in a more complete and better understanding of how the painting was created and its current condition.

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http://www.moovie.en-a.at/kunst_kultur_und_musik/van_gogh_museum_to_keep_sunflowers_in_amsterdam-73562/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:

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