



Vincent van Gogh

What I noticed first about this self-portrait by Vincent van Gogh was the almost startling way the artist's face jumped out at me. The warm colors of yellow and orange contrasted sharply with the cool background and jacket. This made me look more closely at the face. Even though the yellow face with highlights of light green caught my attention, the most arresting feature is the eyes. They look directly out of the painting at the viewer, but from a sideways glance. The knit of the heavy brow add to a look that suggests strength or rebellion. The unusual choice of facial colors supports this idea that van Gogh is making a rebellious statement. But rebellion about what? If you allow your eye to move from the face, it will flow down the white path of the shirt to the artist's palette. The textured dabs of paint on the palette seem like the most realistic parts of the painting. Maybe this is saying that in the world of art, van Gogh sees himself as a rebel? But instead of showing off about this, I believe van Gogh is nervous about it. The color in his eyes links with the background color which swirls in a rhythmic pattern very close to the head. This, along with the green highlights on the face, give a threatening or cramped feeling. So I believe that van Gogh used variations and contrasts in color, texture, and rhythm to make a complex statement about how satisfying, but scary, it might be for an artist to rebel against what's considered normal.