

## Self Portrait As The Grasshopper Trapped Inside Van Gogh's *Olive Trees*

"Grasshopper Found Embedded in van Gogh Masterpiece"

— Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City

(<https://nelson-atkins.org/grasshopper-found-embedded-van-gogh-masterpiece/>)

What can I say?—I wanted to live inside one of his paintings forever,  
that beauty, to immerse myself in a work of art so fully and completely  
that I left this world behind and *it* became my world. I used to watch him  
in the fields from where I clung to a beard of wheat, singing my grasshopper songs.  
He would come carrying a canvas with his easel strapped to his back  
like a gleaner with their scythe come to gather the grain—like the gleaners  
I saw him paint one day, as Grandfather Grasshopper once saw Millet—  
brushes in one hand, palette like a crescent moon round his thumb in the other,  
pockets stuffed with tubes of paint as the others fill theirs with money.  
He looked so happy then, so content, at peace when he was painting;  
I knew I wanted that feeling, too, and knew it came only when he was inside  
of his art, making his paintings. So, one day, I followed him home, hopping at his feet,  
all the way back to the olive groves in the gardens of the hospital at Saint-Rémy.  
He almost noticed me once and would've put me on his shoulder—I know it—  
but I would stop my hopping whenever his footfall ceased and he looked back.  
When he began to paint the *Olive Trees*, I knew it was time, even if it meant  
I might get permanently stuck inside the paint, as my ancestors in the tar pits  
at La Brea. When he was almost ready to apply the last brushstroke, I leapt  
off the edge of the canvas where I'd been resting, unseen, watching him work,  
like the poet Hart Crane would later (or so I overheard once from some museum-goers  
who'd stopped in front of my painting, conversing of art, poetry, and famous suicides) over  
the railing of a cruise ship that was headed for Cuba, into that blue-green beauty forever.