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A Study of Color and Brushwork in Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night*

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Abstract

Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night*, completed in 1889, is one of the most recognizable paintings in the history of modern Western art. Its artistic appeal lies not only in its representation of a night landscape but also in the distinctive visual language created through color, brushwork, and composition. Unlike traditional landscape paintings that place greater emphasis on the realistic reproduction of natural scenery, Van Gogh transforms the appearance of the night sky through exaggerated forms, strong color contrasts, and expressive painting techniques. The extensive use of blue, the bright yellow stars, and the flowing movement of the clouds create a visual atmosphere that combines stillness with energy. This paper examines the artistic characteristics of *The Starry Night*, focusing on its color composition, brushwork, surface texture, and the relationship between these elements. Through visual analysis and reference to relevant art historical literature, the paper explores how Van Gogh uses color to establish spatial relationships and emotional atmosphere, while employing different brushstroke patterns to shape the visual structure of the painting. Particular attention is given to the contrast between warm and cool colors, the directional qualities of brushstrokes, and the interaction between the sky and the landscape. The analysis suggests that color and brushwork are closely connected in the work. Their combined effect transforms a familiar natural scene into an expressive artistic image and demonstrates Van Gogh's individual approach to landscape painting.

Keywords: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, color expression, brushwork, oil painting, artistic style

1. Introduction

Vincent van Gogh occupies an important position in the development of modern Western painting. His works are widely recognized for their vivid colors, distinctive brushstrokes, and strong emotional expression. Although he produced paintings across several genres, including portraits, still lifes, and landscapes, his treatment of color and painting techniques is particularly evident in his landscape works. Among them, *The Starry Night*, completed in June 1889, has attracted considerable attention from art historians, artists, and general audiences. Its unusual visual structure and expressive treatment of natural forms have made it an important subject in discussions of modern painting.

Landscape painting has traditionally been concerned with the relationship between human observation and the natural environment. Artists have used different approaches to represent mountains, rivers, buildings, trees, and changes in light. Some have attempted to reproduce the visible appearance of nature as accurately as possible, while others have emphasized personal interpretation and artistic imagination. Van Gogh's approach belongs more clearly to the latter direction. In *The Starry Night*, he does not simply record the appearance of a night landscape. Instead, he reorganizes its visual elements through color, line, and brushwork, producing a scene that is recognizable but also highly personal.

The painting depicts a village beneath a large night sky. A group of houses occupies the lower part of the canvas,

while distant hills form a transition between the village and the sky. A tall cypress tree rises on the left, creating a strong vertical element. Above the landscape, clouds appear to move in large curved patterns, and several bright stars and a crescent moon illuminate the darkness. The arrangement of these elements creates a contrast between the relative stability of the village and the continuous movement of the sky.

Color is one of the most important features of the painting. Different shades of blue dominate the composition, while yellow and orange provide strong points of visual emphasis. These colors are not used only to describe natural objects. Their relationships establish the atmosphere of the painting and influence how viewers experience the scene. The contrast between warm and cool colors gives the sky a distinctive appearance, while changes in color intensity help organize the composition.

Brushwork is equally important. The visible marks of the brush give the painting its characteristic rhythm and surface texture. Curved strokes dominate the sky, while more controlled lines appear in the buildings and other parts of the landscape. The cypress tree is represented through elongated and irregular strokes that emphasize its upward movement. These differences show that brushwork is not merely a technical method of applying paint. It also contributes to the visual structure of the painting.

Previous discussions of Van Gogh's artistic style have examined his use of complementary colors and the expressive qualities of his painting methods. Thomson (2008) provides a focused study of *The Starry Night*, examining the work within the context of Van Gogh's artistic development. The exhibition publication *Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night* also discusses his treatment of evening and night scenes, including the technical and stylistic characteristics of his paintings (van Heugten et al., 2008). Berezhnoy et al. (2007) investigate the use of complementary colors in Van Gogh's paintings through digital image analysis, offering additional information about his color relationships.

These studies provide a useful foundation for examining the painting, but the visual characteristics of the work also deserve close attention in their own right. A discussion of *The Starry Night* should not be limited to identifying its historical background or describing the artist's general style. The arrangement of colors, the direction of brushstrokes, and the interaction between different parts of the composition are essential to understanding its artistic expression.

This paper therefore focuses on the relationship between color and brushwork in *The Starry Night*. It first introduces the painting's background and compositional structure, then examines its color characteristics and painting techniques. Particular attention is given to the interaction between color, texture, movement, and emotional expression. The final discussion considers the artistic value of these techniques and their significance for understanding Van Gogh's approach to landscape painting.

2. An Overview of *The Starry Night*

2.1 The Creation Background of the Painting

The Starry Night was painted while Van Gogh was staying at the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole asylum in Saint-Rémy, France, in 1889. During this period, he continued to paint landscapes, portraits, and other subjects. Although his personal circumstances were difficult, he maintained a strong interest in artistic creation. The natural environment around the asylum provided him with many subjects, including gardens, fields, trees, and distant hills. The painting is generally associated with the landscape around Saint-Rémy, although its final composition does not provide a completely accurate record of what the artist saw. Van Gogh selected and reorganized visual elements to create a more expressive image. The village, the hills, the cypress tree, and the sky form a coherent landscape, but their arrangement also reflects artistic interpretation.

The relationship between observation and imagination is particularly important when considering the painting's artistic character. The work contains recognizable natural forms, yet the sky is represented in a highly individual way. Its curved clouds, enlarged stars, and flowing lines do not follow the appearance of an ordinary night sky. They show how Van Gogh transformed visual experience through painting. MoMA's account of the work emphasizes the combination of observation, composition, and expressive technique in the painting (Museum of Modern Art [MoMA], n.d.). This combination helps explain why the work cannot be understood simply as a realistic landscape. Its subject comes from the natural world, but its final appearance is shaped by the artist's personal visual language.

2.2 The Overall Composition

The composition of *The Starry Night* is organized around the relationship between the sky and the landscape. The upper part of the painting occupies a large proportion of the canvas and contains most of the movement and color variation. The lower part presents the village and surrounding landscape through relatively stable forms. The sky is the dominant visual area. Its curved clouds and circular patterns create a continuous movement across the canvas. The stars and moon appear as bright points within this larger structure. Their distribution prevents the

sky from becoming visually uniform and provides several areas that attract the viewer's attention.

The village below is represented through buildings, rooftops, and a church tower. Compared with the sky, these elements appear more controlled and stable. Their vertical and horizontal lines establish a clear architectural structure. The houses also create a sense of human presence within the natural environment. The distant hills form a transition between the village and the sky. Their curved outlines connect the lower and upper sections, while their darker colors help distinguish the landscape from the bright celestial elements. This arrangement allows the composition to remain connected even though the sky and village have noticeably different visual characteristics.

The cypress tree is another important compositional element. Its position on the left side of the painting gives it considerable visual weight. Its dark color contrasts with the lighter areas of the sky, while its vertical shape provides a counterpoint to the horizontal and curved forms around it. The tree also creates a connection between the land and the sky, helping to unify the overall composition. The arrangement of these elements demonstrates that the painting is not simply a collection of separate objects. Each part contributes to the visual balance of the whole. The village provides stability, the sky introduces movement, and the cypress tree links the two areas.

2.3 The Relationship Between Natural Forms and Artistic Interpretation

One of the most distinctive features of *The Starry Night* is the way natural forms are transformed. The sky, stars, hills, and trees remain recognizable, but their appearance is modified through exaggeration and expressive treatment. The stars are larger and brighter than they would normally appear in a realistic landscape. The clouds form broad curves, and the cypress tree rises like a dark flame. These changes do not make the landscape completely abstract. Instead, they create a balance between recognizable natural objects and individual artistic interpretation.

This approach is important because it allows Van Gogh to maintain the basic subject of landscape painting while expanding its expressive possibilities. The viewer can still recognize a village at night, but the painting also conveys a stronger sense of movement and atmosphere than a straightforward naturalistic representation might achieve. The relationship between observation and interpretation is also reflected in Van Gogh's interest in color. Rather than treating color as a fixed property of objects, he uses it to establish visual relationships and create a particular atmosphere. The same principle can be seen in his treatment of brushwork, where the physical movement of the brush becomes part of the image.

3. The Use of Color in *The Starry Night*

3.1 The Dominant Role of Blue

Blue is the dominant color in *The Starry Night*. Different shades of blue occupy most of the sky and establish the general atmosphere of the painting. However, the blue areas are not uniform. They include deep blue, lighter blue, and blue-green tones, creating variations in brightness and visual depth. The darker blue areas provide a background for the stars and moon. They also make the sky appear extensive and deep. Lighter blue tones are used to distinguish the curved forms of the clouds and create movement within the larger sky area. These variations prevent the composition from becoming flat.

The distribution of blue also helps establish the relationship between the upper and lower parts of the painting. The sky contains a wider range of blue tones, while the landscape below uses darker and more restrained colors. This difference creates a visual separation between the two areas without making them appear completely disconnected. Blue is often associated with night, distance, and quietness, but its effect in the painting is more complicated. The extensive blue background gives the scene a sense of depth, yet the curved brushstrokes and bright stars prevent it from appearing entirely peaceful. The sky seems to contain continuous movement beneath its dark surface.

The use of blue therefore serves several purposes at the same time. It establishes the setting, creates spatial depth, and provides a background against which the warmer colors can become more prominent.

3.2 The Contrast Between Warm and Cool Colors

The relationship between blue and yellow is one of the most important color characteristics of *The Starry Night*. Blue occupies a large part of the composition, while yellow and orange appear in the stars, moon, and some illuminated areas of the village. This contrast creates a strong visual distinction between the background and the main points of emphasis. The yellow stars appear brighter because they are surrounded by darker blue tones. Their visibility does not depend only on their position in the sky. The difference between warm and cool colors also contributes to their visual strength.

Berezhnoy et al. (2007) discuss Van Gogh's use of complementary colors and examine how such color relationships appear across his paintings. Their research indicates that complementary color transitions became an important feature of his artistic practice, particularly during his later years in France. Although their study

uses digital image analysis rather than traditional art criticism, it provides useful support for understanding the significance of color contrast in Van Gogh's work. In *The Starry Night*, the relationship between blue and yellow is especially noticeable because the two colors appear in clearly differentiated areas. The blue establishes the general visual environment, while yellow creates points of emphasis. The contrast is strong, but the colors remain connected through their repeated appearance across the composition.

The yellow stars also differ in size and intensity. Some appear as small points, while others occupy larger areas with surrounding circular forms. This variation gives the sky a more complex visual structure. If all the stars were represented in the same size and color intensity, the sky would appear more repetitive. Their differences create a visual rhythm that supports the movement of the clouds. The warm colors in the village also contribute to the overall balance. The illuminated windows create small areas of brightness in the lower part of the painting. These details connect the warm tones of the stars with the landscape below, preventing the color contrast from being limited to the sky alone.

3.3 Color Layers and the Sense of Depth

Color plays an important role in establishing visual depth. In *The Starry Night*, the artist does not rely entirely on linear perspective to organize space. Changes in color intensity and contrast also help distinguish different areas of the composition. The darker areas of the sky create a sense of distance, while lighter blue and yellow areas attract attention. The stars appear visually prominent because of their brightness and the contrast surrounding them. This creates a difference between the background and the foreground of visual attention.

The lower landscape also contains differences in color intensity. The hills are represented through relatively dark tones, while the buildings have more varied colors and clearer outlines. These differences help separate the village from the distant environment. The cypress tree has a particularly important role in this spatial arrangement. Its dark color makes it stand out against the sky, while its position in the foreground gives it a strong visual presence. The contrast between the tree and the sky creates a clear sense of distance.

The use of color in this painting therefore does not depend only on the traditional distinction between light and shadow. It also relies on the relationship between warm and cool colors, changes in saturation, and the distribution of bright and dark areas. Van Heugten et al. (2008) discuss the technical and stylistic characteristics of Van Gogh's night scenes, including his treatment of color and light. Their discussion provides a broader context for understanding how the artist used color to represent nocturnal subjects without relying on conventional dark tones alone.

3.4 The Relationship Between Color and Light

The representation of light is another important aspect of the painting. In a realistic night landscape, light sources are often shown through differences in brightness and darkness. Van Gogh, however, uses color relationships to make the stars and moon appear more vivid. The yellow and orange areas stand out against the blue background. Their visual intensity is strengthened by the surrounding colors, while the circular brushstrokes around them create the impression of light spreading outward.

The moon is particularly noticeable because of its bright color and position in the upper part of the composition. It is not represented as a small, isolated object. Instead, it becomes part of the larger rhythm of the sky. The surrounding curved forms help integrate it into the overall visual structure. The stars also create different points of light. Their varied sizes and surrounding colors make them appear as individual visual elements rather than identical decorative marks. This gives the sky a sense of depth and irregularity.

The illuminated windows in the village provide a different type of light. Their smaller scale and more limited brightness contrast with the larger celestial lights. This difference establishes a relationship between the human environment and the natural world. The painting's treatment of light demonstrates that brightness is not determined only by the physical appearance of an object. It can also be created through color contrast, surrounding forms, and the arrangement of visual elements.

3.5 Color and Emotional Atmosphere

The colors in *The Starry Night* do more than describe objects. They also influence the emotional atmosphere of the scene. The extensive use of blue creates a feeling of depth and quietness, but the sky does not appear entirely peaceful. Its curved forms and bright areas introduce a sense of tension and movement. The yellow stars, meanwhile, provide warmth and visual energy.

The emotional quality of the work should not be reduced to a simple interpretation of blue as sadness or yellow as happiness. The meaning of color depends on its position, intensity, and relationship with other visual elements. In this painting, blue can suggest distance and stillness, while its interaction with yellow creates a more complex atmosphere. The contrast between the quiet village and the active sky also influences the viewer's emotional response. The buildings appear relatively stable, while the sky seems to move continuously. The difference

creates a sense of tension that is not expressed through the subject matter alone.

The painting therefore demonstrates how color can influence the interpretation of a landscape. The viewer does not simply identify the colors of objects but experiences the relationships among them. The overall emotional effect emerges from the combination of contrast, brightness, and visual rhythm.

4. The Characteristics of Brushwork

4.1 Short and Rhythmic Brushstrokes

The brushwork in *The Starry Night* is one of the most recognizable aspects of the painting. The sky is filled with short, curved, and directional strokes. These marks are not applied randomly. Their arrangement follows the movement of the clouds and creates a continuous visual rhythm. The central part of the sky contains several large swirling forms. Smaller brushstrokes follow their curves, reinforcing the impression of movement. This treatment gives the sky a sense of energy that would be difficult to achieve through smooth and uniform paint application.

The repeated use of short strokes also creates visual continuity. Individual marks remain visible, but they are organized in related directions. The viewer can follow these directions across the sky, experiencing the movement as a connected visual process rather than a collection of separate lines. The brushstrokes vary according to the objects they describe. The sky contains curved and flowing marks, while some parts of the village are painted with more controlled horizontal and vertical strokes. The cypress tree is represented through elongated, upward-moving forms. Such differences help distinguish the visual characteristics of individual elements while maintaining a consistent overall style.

Thomson (2008) provides a focused discussion of the painting's execution and artistic characteristics. His study is useful for understanding how the arrangement of individual strokes contributes to the overall structure of the composition.

4.2 The Direction of Brushstrokes

The direction of brushstrokes has a significant effect on the visual movement of the painting. In the sky, curved strokes create a sense of rotation and flow. Their direction changes gradually, allowing the viewer's attention to move across different areas of the composition. The horizontal and vertical strokes in the village have a different effect. They reinforce the architectural structure of the buildings and make the lower part of the painting appear comparatively stable. The contrast between these directions helps distinguish the visual characteristics of the sky and the landscape.

The cypress tree introduces a strong vertical movement. Its elongated strokes rise from the bottom of the composition toward the upper part of the canvas. This movement provides a visual connection between the land and the sky, while also creating a contrast with the horizontal forms of the village. The distant hills are represented through curved outlines that connect the landscape with the flowing forms above them. This creates a gradual transition rather than a sharp division between different parts of the painting.

The direction of brushstrokes therefore contributes to more than the appearance of individual objects. It establishes a visual structure that guides the viewer's attention and determines how the composition is experienced.

4.3 The Use of Thick Paint and Surface Texture

Van Gogh's brushwork is not only a means of creating lines and shapes. It also gives the painting a noticeable surface texture. The paint is applied in relatively thick layers in many areas, making the direction of the brush visible. This technique allows the viewer to recognize the physical process of painting. The surface does not appear completely smooth because the paint itself becomes part of the visual experience.

The stars and moon are especially noticeable in this respect. Their surrounding areas contain visible paint marks that emphasize their brightness and distinguish them from the darker sky. The cypress tree also has a strong surface character, with dense and elongated strokes that make it appear almost flame-like. The thickness of the paint contributes to the visual presence of the image. Instead of creating the illusion of a completely smooth surface, Van Gogh allows the material qualities of oil paint to remain visible. This gives the painting a physical character that is closely related to its expressive style.

MoMA (n.d.) notes the importance of thickly applied paint and the visible movement of the brush in the composition. These characteristics help explain why the surface of the painting is as important as the objects represented within it. The use of texture also creates differences between various parts of the composition. The sky contains numerous short and curved strokes, while the buildings are represented through more controlled marks. The cypress tree has a denser and more irregular surface. These differences allow each element to maintain its individual character.

4.4 Brushwork and the Representation of Movement

The most distinctive feature of the brushwork is its ability to suggest movement. The sky appears to turn and flow, while the landscape below remains comparatively stable. This difference creates a visual tension between the upper and lower sections of the painting. The curved strokes in the sky guide the viewer's attention across the canvas. Their repeated directions establish a rhythm, allowing the eye to move from one area to another. The stars contribute to this effect through their circular forms and surrounding brush marks.

The clouds appear to move around the bright celestial elements, making the sky seem active rather than static. The movement is not represented through a single line or isolated object. It develops through the interaction of multiple brushstrokes across the entire sky. The village, by comparison, is composed of more stable lines and shapes. The horizontal roofs and vertical buildings provide a visual contrast to the curved sky. This difference helps establish a clear distinction between the two parts of the painting.

The cypress tree creates another type of movement. Its upward direction gives the composition a strong vertical element, while its irregular outline prevents it from appearing completely static. The tree seems to rise from the landscape and enter the space of the sky. Brushwork therefore performs several functions at the same time. It describes objects, creates texture, establishes direction, and organizes the viewer's visual experience. In *The Starry Night*, these functions are closely connected.

4.5 Differences in Brushwork Across the Composition

Although the painting has a consistent overall style, the brushwork is not identical throughout the canvas. Different objects are represented through different types of marks. The sky contains the most dynamic brushwork. Curved and repeated strokes create movement and establish the dominant visual rhythm. The stars are surrounded by circular forms that distinguish them from the larger areas of blue.

The village is represented through more controlled marks. The outlines of buildings and rooftops are relatively clear, and their horizontal and vertical directions provide a sense of order. The windows and other small details are painted with limited but noticeable color variations. The hills are represented through broader curved forms. Their brushwork is less detailed than that of the buildings but helps connect the lower landscape with the sky.

The cypress tree contains a combination of long and short strokes. Its irregular surface creates a strong visual contrast with the more controlled forms of the village. These differences demonstrate that Van Gogh did not apply one uniform technique to every object. He adjusted the direction and density of his brushwork according to the visual role of each element. The result is a composition in which different textures and movements contribute to a unified artistic expression.

5. The Relationship Between Color and Brushwork

5.1 The Interaction Between Color and Form

Color and brushwork are often discussed as separate aspects of painting, but their interaction is particularly important in *The Starry Night*. The visual effect of the work does not come from its colors alone or from the movement of individual strokes. It is produced through the combination of these elements. The blue and yellow areas establish the main color contrast, while the curved brushstrokes make the sky appear active. If the same colors were applied in a completely smooth manner, the painting would produce a different visual impression. Likewise, expressive brushstrokes without the strong contrast between warm and cool colors would not create the same degree of visual intensity.

The stars provide a clear example of this relationship. Their bright yellow centers contrast with the surrounding blue, while the circular and curved strokes around them suggest a spreading glow. The color establishes brightness, and the brushwork gives that brightness a visible direction and texture. A similar relationship can be observed in the cypress tree. Its dark color separates it from the surrounding sky, while the long and irregular strokes emphasize its vertical movement. The tree is therefore both a recognizable natural form and an expressive visual element.

The clouds also demonstrate the interaction between color and form. Their blue and blue-green tones create a continuous visual area, while the direction of the strokes gives the clouds their distinctive shapes. Color establishes the overall atmosphere, whereas brushwork creates the impression of movement within that atmosphere.

5.2 The Interaction Between Color Contrast and Visual Rhythm

The relationship between color and brushwork is also reflected in the rhythm of the painting. The distribution of warm and cool colors creates areas of visual emphasis, while the direction of brushstrokes guides the viewer's attention between them. The yellow stars appear as important visual points within the blue sky. Their positions create a pattern of brightness, while the surrounding curved strokes connect them to the larger movement of the

clouds. The viewer's attention moves between the stars rather than remaining fixed on one area.

The cypress tree provides a different visual direction. Its dark color creates a strong contrast with the sky, while its upward strokes introduce a vertical movement that interrupts the horizontal and circular patterns elsewhere in the composition. The village also contributes to the visual rhythm. Its relatively restrained colors and more stable forms create a pause after the strong movement of the sky. The illuminated windows provide small areas of warmth, maintaining a connection with the brighter colors above.

This arrangement shows that color contrast and brushstroke direction work together to control the visual rhythm of the painting. Neither element is sufficient on its own to explain the entire composition.

5.3 The Relationship Between Color, Texture, and Light

Color and texture also interact in the representation of light. The bright yellow stars and moon are not simply painted as flat shapes. Their surrounding brushstrokes create a sense of expansion and make the light appear more active. The texture of the paint contributes to this effect. Visible brush marks make the bright areas appear physically present on the canvas, while the darker blue background creates a strong visual contrast. The combination of these elements gives the stars a distinctive appearance.

The same principle can be observed in the village. The illuminated windows are small, but their warm colors stand out against the darker buildings. Their limited size makes them different from the large celestial lights, yet they help establish a connection between the human environment and the night sky. The relationship between light and texture therefore contributes to the overall unity of the work. Brightness is not represented through color alone. It is strengthened by the surrounding strokes, the thickness of the paint, and the distribution of darker areas.

5.4 Color and Brushwork as Means of Emotional Expression

The emotional atmosphere of *The Starry Night* emerges from the interaction between color and brushwork. The extensive use of blue creates a sense of depth, while the bright yellow stars introduce warmth and visual energy. At the same time, the curved strokes of the sky create a feeling of movement that contrasts with the stable village below. If the sky were painted with smooth and regular lines, its atmosphere would be different. The strong color contrast might remain, but much of the sense of movement would be reduced. Similarly, if the brushwork remained expressive but the color relationships were more restrained, the visual intensity of the painting would change.

The emotional effect therefore comes from the combined use of several visual elements. Color establishes the general atmosphere, brushwork gives the image its rhythm, and composition determines how these effects are distributed across the canvas. This relationship is one of the most important characteristics of Van Gogh's painting. His technique does not merely describe the external appearance of nature. It allows the artist's individual interpretation to become visible through the materials and methods of painting.

5.5 The Unity of Visual Elements

Although color, brushwork, texture, and composition can be examined separately, they form an interconnected visual system in *The Starry Night*. Each element contributes to the overall effect, and their interaction gives the painting its distinctive character. The stars, for example, are defined through their color, shape, and surrounding brushstrokes. The cypress tree is distinguished through its dark tone, vertical direction, and dense surface texture. The village is organized through relatively stable lines and restrained colors.

These elements are different in appearance, but they remain connected through the overall arrangement of the painting. The sky dominates the composition, the landscape provides a stable foundation, and the cypress tree links the two areas. Van Gogh's approach reflects an important characteristic of Post-Impressionist painting: the use of visible artistic techniques to express personal responses to the world. Rather than hiding the process of painting, he allows color and paint application to remain clearly visible. In *The Starry Night*, this approach transforms an ordinary landscape subject into a highly expressive composition.

6. The Artistic Value of Color and Brushwork in *The Starry Night*

The artistic value of *The Starry Night* is closely connected to Van Gogh's treatment of visual elements. His use of color and brushwork demonstrates that landscape painting does not have to depend entirely on accurate reproduction. The artist can reorganize natural forms and develop a personal visual language through the selection and arrangement of colors, lines, and textures. One important aspect of the painting is its treatment of natural light. The night sky is not represented through darkness alone. Instead, the artist uses contrasting colors to make the stars and moon appear vivid against the surrounding space. This approach expands the expressive possibilities of landscape painting. It also changes the way viewers understand a night scene, as the sky becomes an active part of the composition rather than a simple background for the landscape. The contrast between the bright celestial bodies and the darker surroundings gives the painting a distinctive visual character.

Another important feature is the visible presence of the artist's hand. The brushstrokes are not concealed, and their directions remain an essential part of the composition. The physical surface of the painting contributes to its visual identity. This makes the work interesting not only as a representation of nature but also as an example of how painting materials can be used expressively. The relationship between color and brushwork also provides a useful perspective for understanding artistic creation. Color can influence the emotional atmosphere of an image, while brushwork can affect its rhythm, texture, and visual movement. When these elements are carefully coordinated, they can produce an expressive effect that goes beyond the individual properties of each technique. The differences in brushwork across the sky, village, and cypress tree also show that technical choices can respond to the character of different subjects. Rather than applying the same treatment throughout the canvas, Van Gogh adjusts the direction and intensity of his strokes to create variety while maintaining visual unity.

From the perspective of art appreciation, *The Starry Night* also demonstrates why the analysis of painting should consider more than its subject matter. Simply identifying the village, stars, moon, and cypress tree cannot fully explain the artistic character of the work. The arrangement of these objects, the relationship between different colors, and the direction of the brushstrokes all contribute to the viewer's experience. The viewer's attention is guided between the moving sky and the relatively quiet village, making the act of looking an important part of experiencing the painting. This interaction between different visual areas gives the composition a sense of balance without reducing its expressive energy.

Van Gogh's artistic approach has continued to attract attention because it demonstrates how familiar subjects can be transformed through individual interpretation. His painting techniques also offer an important reference for understanding the expressive possibilities of oil painting. The visible application of paint, the use of strong color contrasts, and the organization of rhythmic lines show how technical choices can become part of an artist's personal visual language. For students of painting and art appreciation, the work provides a clear example of the relationship between artistic technique and visual expression. Its analysis does not require complicated theoretical models. Careful observation of the painting itself can reveal how color, line, composition, and texture contribute to the final artistic effect. The lasting appeal of the painting also lies in the fact that these techniques do not weaken the connection with the natural world; instead, they offer viewers a different way of experiencing a familiar landscape. In this sense, *The Starry Night* remains valuable not only for its distinctive appearance but also for the possibilities it reveals in the use of color and brushwork.

7. Conclusion

An examination of *The Starry Night* shows that color and brushwork are central to the artistic expression of the painting. Van Gogh uses different shades of blue to establish the atmosphere of the night sky and introduces yellow and orange to create strong visual contrasts. His curved, short, and directional brushstrokes give the sky a sense of movement, while the visible texture of the paint strengthens the physical presence of the image. The painting's color arrangement contributes to both its visual structure and emotional atmosphere. The contrast between warm and cool colors creates points of emphasis, while changes in color intensity help establish spatial relationships. The stars and moon stand out against the blue background, and the illuminated windows connect the celestial lights with the human environment below.

Brushwork plays an equally important role. Different directions and patterns of strokes distinguish the sky, village, hills, and cypress tree. The visible application of paint creates texture and movement, making the surface of the painting an essential part of its artistic character. These elements work together rather than independently. Color establishes the visual relationships among different parts of the composition, while brushwork reinforces their shapes, textures, and movement. Their interaction gives the painting its distinctive emotional atmosphere and visual rhythm. The contrast between the relatively stable village and the dynamic sky further strengthens the overall composition.

The study of *The Starry Night* also offers a broader understanding of Van Gogh's approach to landscape painting. His work demonstrates that artistic expression does not rely solely on reproducing external appearances. Through the deliberate use of color and painting techniques, an artist can transform a familiar scene into a personal interpretation of the world. The lasting appeal of *The Starry Night* is closely related to this combination of visual clarity and expressive freedom. Its subject remains recognizable, yet its colors and brushstrokes give the landscape a character that cannot be explained through realistic representation alone. The painting therefore provides an important example of how technical methods, visual organization, and personal expression can work together in modern oil painting.

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