

# Reviewing vincent van gogh's painting: thatched cottages at cordeville



Vincent Van Gogh's *Thatched Cottages at Cordeville* was painted at a particularly difficult time in his life; suffering through mental health issues and following his period of voluntary admission into an insane asylum, he moved to the town of Auvers, France. There is a solace to be found in the scenic beauty of the small, rural town and its serenity, versus the hustle and bustle of city life which would've driven him past the point of insanity. There is an emphasis placed on thatched-roof cottages, as Van Gogh himself made his residence in one at the point in his life. His intent behind this painting was to express his unique perspective of the world as he sees it, through the distortion of the landscape and architecture, the usage of diverse colors and shapes to suggest an emotional scheme behind the work, and how they're interwoven into the objects etched into the painting.

*Thatched Cottages at Cordeville* portrays a row of cottages, per the title of the painting, amid farm land, and takes place at the late hour of night coinciding with a full moon hanging above the night sky, and patches of land surrounded by trees, shrubbery and fencing. Van Gogh's signature swirls make an appearance, prominently featured in another of his masterpieces, *The Starry Night*. Perhaps the most visually striking feature of the panoramic is the cottage which takes center-stage, and its thatched roof that appears to meld into the heavens, the earthen mounds, and everything in between. Also seen is the brick-and-mortar walls that close off the cottages from the streets and from one another, and a blurred tree in the upper-right corner, high up in the background. However, there is a noticeable lack of any animals, or people for that matter, in the scene.

Swirls, such as those in the clouds as well as in the pastures, are indicative of his unorganized mind, or one at odds with the true picture of reality. They begin along the foreground in the streets of the small-town, making its way into the field, the thatched cottages, and goes deeper into the background and begins to blend into the night sky above the plains, and the moon. Although its scenery may seem idyllic, an air of malefic stemming from the dull and dark colors under the light of the full moon suggests trouble in paradise. In regard to the spatial dimensions, there is a diagonal divide between the cottages and the fields, between the natural world and its periphery, with more or less equal attention paid to the scale and detail of the different scenes, and the swirls relative to the size of the object, appearing more prominent with the trees and the thatched cottage painted along the diagonal, than with the small-scale objects such as the bushes, hay, and pastures.

There's also Van Gogh's cartoonish style of painting, with some elements of realism in that the objects depicted are found in the real-world, the way they're illustrated is largely subject to Van Gogh's creative license in the amalgamation of diverse colors, shapes, and even the objects that branch off and conjoin with one another. Likewise, there's an underlying simplicity in all aspects of the painting: the narrow scope of colors, the open-ended, amalgam of shapes and parts of the image, and in the overarching idea of the scene as serene and problem-free. With respect to surface texture, it comes across as soft-to-the-touch yet pebbled, explained by Van Gogh's fast-pace when wielding the paintbrush.

His choice of colors should also be applauded for its softer shades and gentle intermix of these hues, giving off a subtle pastoral feel. His brushstroke is rushed and heavy, as if a sense of urgency is upon him, and that give off the effect of discoloration and blurring, but also points to a world slowly falling to pieces in front of his eyes. Lending credibility to the idea that the softer colors point towards an underwhelming mellowness the artist aspires to, far away from the overexcitement and angst that plagues him on a regular basis. Almost cartoonish, the different colors and their shades evoke a sense of wonderment with the natural world and experiencing it this otherworldly scene from a first-person perspective would be eye-opening and insightful as to the inner workings, and trappings, of Van Gogh's consciousness. In terms of lighting, there is a substantial amount of light usually present in daytime, even with the full moon painted into the image, a conflict between the times of day as just another example of this artwork's embrace of dissimilitude in the painting.

Concurrent with this are the shapes overlain in the image; fluid and gelled, there is a distinctive lack of definition demonstrating the artist's refusal or inability to compartmentalize objects in his work. Neither separate nor independent from one another, but instead, everything in the scene is an extension of something else, a continuity with no end in sight. Clouds blending in with trees, trees with the thatched cottages, and so on and so forth. Two-dimensionally, the image is just a flat surface with a myriad of shapes, colors, and their contributions to a dreamlike display. Three-dimensionally, the viewer is immersed in a setting that can only be described as weird, unraveling at the seams and destined for a slow dissolution into

nothingness. Van Gogh's liberalism with the artistic rendering of shapes is shown by the waves that ripple through the objects, stretching them beyond their reasonable proportions.

Succinctly, Van Gogh's Thatched Cottages at Cordeville establishes a connection between Van Gogh's intent inasmuch as how he wished to convey his distinct point-of-view on the world around him and how he wished to convey his emotions through his work. Multi-layered in its presentation, Van Gogh's picturesque small-town paradise is pleasing to the eye, not because of its perfection, but rather because of its imperfection: the observer's warped vision, the melting and whirling of this soupy illustration signifies Van Gogh's first-hand experience of beauty and his own model of it, accompanied by how his mind interprets that same beauty in its own alternate picture of the real-world.