



Pink Peach Tree in Blossom: March 1888

It was in Paris, under the influence of the Impressionists and Japanese prints, that Vincent began to dream of his Japanese utopia in Provence. He travelled there in February 1888, whilst there was still snow on the ground and he recalled in one of his very many letters to Theo, "I can still remember vividly how excited I became that Winter when travelling from Paris to Arles, how I was constantly on the lookout to see if we had reached Japan yet". On Monday the 30th April, in the last art appreciation meeting until the Autumn, we will consider how all that went before in Holland and Paris, was a preparation for his greatest outpouring of masterpieces in the nine months before his first mental breakdown on the 23rd December 1888. We will try to answer the question as to what degree, Gauguin's presence in the Yellow House in the Autumn of 1888 contributed to this dramatic event, or was there just an inevitability, that Vincent's punishing working regime, ignoring his health and drinking too much, would exacerbate his underlying mental instability with such terrible consequences.