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Cover picture Vincent Van Gogh (1853–1890). *Portrait of Dr Rey* (1889).

In January 1889, Van Gogh was finishing his treatment at the hospital in Arles after his first attack of mental illness. During his stay there, the artist struck up a friendship with his doctor, the intern Felix Rey (1865–1932), who showed an interest in his paintings. To thank the doctor and simultaneously interest him in his art, Van Gogh decided to paint his portrait, finishing the work by 17 January. *Portrait of Dr Rey* is marked by an intentional simplification of painting technique, intended perhaps to make the artist's creative language more accessible and understandable for the provincial doctor and dilettante. The recipient failed to appreciate his gift, however, and later parted with it without regret. In 1908, the picture entered Sergei Shchukin's collection in Moscow. This text is from the exhibition catalogue *From Russia: French and Russian Master Paintings 1870–1925 from Moscow and St Petersburg*, published by Palace Editions, Europe, in association with the Royal Academy of Arts. *Portrait of Dr Rey* is currently exhibited (until 18 April) at the Royal Academy, London; on loan from the Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

