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There may be a great fire in our hearts, yet no one ever comes to warm himself at it, and the passers-by see only a wisp of smoke. --Vincent van Gogh

Seeing Truth in van Gogh

"In her book *The Pursuit of Spiritual Wisdom: The Thought and Art of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin*, art historian Naomi Margois Maurer discusses the state of mystical consciousness in which an individual sees directly into the essence of reality, senses nature's unity, and 'feels himself to be part of the flow of universal life.' She goes on to describe it as a direct experience of fundamental truths which are inaccessible to our rational state of awareness and ordinary mental processes. It is a state of knowledge and feeling, a wakeful dreaming. Van Gogh himself said it this way in a letter to his brother Theo, 'I have a terrible lucidity at moments these days, when nature is so beautiful. I am not conscious of myself anymore, and the picture comes to me as in a dream.'" Cynthia Waldman shares more in this personal essay.

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You can enter van Gogh's universe through this rich repository of his letters here.