

YOUR INSAPIX PAPER

Author Palatino 14 Pt

ABSTRACT: Palatino 9 Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena Symbolic
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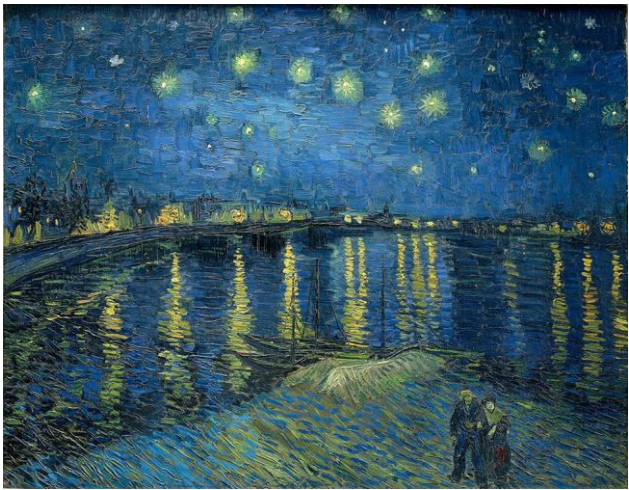
Main Text Palatino 10 Pt. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Main Text Palatino 10. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Theophrastus Paracelsus of Hohenheim (1493–1541), significant followers such as Oswald Croll and Gerard Dorn, and the critical response of opponents like the alchemist Andreas Libavius to the Paracelsian conjunction of *astrologia* and *spagiria*.

Indented quote Palatino 9 Pt If you do not understand the use of the Cabalists and the old astronomers, you are not born by God for the Spagyric art, or chosen by Nature for Vulcan's work, or created to open your mouth about the Alchemical Art.¹

So declares the iconoclastic Swiss medical theorist and hermetic philosopher

¹ Footnote Palatino 9 Pt Paracelsus, *De Tinctura Physicorum*, in *Aureoli Philippi Theophrasti Bombasti von Hohenheim Paracelsi Opera*, ed. Johann Huser, 2 vols. (Strasburg, 1603), Vol. 1, pp. 922–25, at p. 923.

Theophrastus Paracelsus of Hohenheim (1493–1541) early in the sixteenth century, Main Text Palatino 10. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. Symbolic representations of celestial phenomena have always had an important role in art. tradition contrasted with the empirical, scientific view of nature that artists came to regard as the proper domain of a modern art after the Enlightenment. The perception of a divide between the ‘real’ and the symbolic was symptomatic of this new view of art and of science.² Yet, the persistence of symbolic associations, metaphorical references, and multilayered iconography in artistic representations of the sky suggests that such symbols were still meaningful and relevant during the age of science.³



Picture caption and source Palatino 9 Fig. 2.1: Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night over the Rhône*, 1888. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Van Gogh thought of the sky in spiritual, if not religious, terms, a realm both

² J.McKim Malville, *Guide to Prehistoric Astronomy in the Southwest* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 2008), 46–47.

³ Malville, *Prehistoric Astronomy*, 53–54.

remote and yet potentially accessible.⁴ His understanding of the stars was shaped symbolically: they remind us of our own limits and our mortality.⁵ The lights of the town and their reflections on the waters mediate between the earthly and celestial realms. The artificial lights are imitations of the stars in the sky.⁶ Their sparkling reflections on the rippling waters of the Rhône are the earth-bound recreation of the twinkling of those stars. The technology of artificial illumination contrasts with the natural stars.⁷ Light, both natural and artificial, is also an emblem of the sense of sight, the chief concern of artists and thus the essential metaphor of visual art.

Just a few months before *Starry Night over the Rhône* was painted, Van Gogh speculated about the relationship of art to the stars. In a letter to his sister, he observes:

It often seems to me that the night is even more richly coloured than the day, coloured in the most intense violets, blues and greens. If you look carefully you'll see that some stars are lemony, others have a pink, green, forget-me-not blue glow. And without labouring the point, it's clear that to paint a starry sky it's not nearly enough to put white spots on blue-black.⁸

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⁴ Clive Ruggles and Nicholas Saunders, *Astronomies and Cultures* (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1993), 99–100.

⁵ Ruggles and Saunders, *Astronomies and Cultures*, 132–33.

⁶ Charles Burnett, 'The Astrologer's Assay of the Alchemist: Early References to Alchemy in Arabic and Latin Texts', *Ambix* 39, no. 3 (1992): pp. 103–9.

⁷ Burnett, 'The Astrologer's Assay', pp. 103–9.

⁸ No. 678 (*Brieven* 1990 681, *Complete Letters* W7). From: Vincent van Gogh, To: Willemien van Gogh Date: Arles, Sunday, 9 and about Friday, 14 September 1888. Location Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, inv. nos. b707 a-b V/1962.

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