



Arlene Keller, left, is about to turn 104. On Tuesday, Kelly Krenzel and her team from Hope Blooms brought their 100,000th bouquet to Arlene as a way to celebrate the nonprofit's milestone.

Photos by Abby Makay / WDAY News

Something to CELEBRATE every day'



Hope Blooms delivers 100,000th bouquet of repurposed flowers



Kelly Krenzel, founder of Hope Blooms, worked with her team of volunteers as the all prepared to deliver the organization's 100,000th bouquet.

BY KEVIN WALLEVAND
WDAY

FARGO

One of community's "fan favorite" nonprofit recently reached a major milestone.

On Tuesday, Hope Blooms made its 100,000th delivery of donated flowers.

The impact of these deliveries every week is changing the lives of those who make the bouquets and those people who are surprised to get them.

Inside a quaint

warehouse space in north Fargo, Hope Blooms is buzzing with a lot of talking and laughter.

Volunteers standing at tables are selecting donated flowers from local grocery stores and funeral homes to make that perfect bouquet.

"Lots of beautiful colors and textures to work with," a volunteer said as she worked on arranging.

Those flowers are headed to someone in the community.

"Oh yeah, that is so pretty," Hope Blooms

BOUQUET on B11

Minnesota yard sale van Gogh for \$50?

Company claims 2016 find is an authentic work; worth at least \$15M

BY JEREMY FUGLEBERG
Forum News Service

MINNETONKA, Minn. — The painting shows a dour fisherman on a beach.

He is smoking a pipe, the sea stretching into the distance behind him, and he holds a net, contemplating a glass weight inscribed with a cross.

In the bottom right corner of the painting, in the customary spot for an artist's signature, is a single painted word: "Elimar."

This enigmatic painting — reportedly purchased at a Minnetonka, Minnesota, yard sale in

2016 for \$50 — now has a lot of questions swirling around it.

It's not clear how long the 17-inch-square oil-on-canvas painting sat in the yard sale, or whose yard sale it was.

It's not clear who purchased the painting at the sale. And it's not clear how much they were paid when they sold it to New York-based company LMI Group International, which describes itself as "a data science company serving the arts and cultural heritage sector."

But one thing is clear, the company now says. On Jan. 28, LMI Group

claimed it had proven the painting is a genuine work by Vincent van Gogh, painted by the Dutch master in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, in 1889, and is worth at least \$15 million.

"This moving likeness embodies van Gogh's recurring theme of redemption, a concept frequently discussed in his letters and art," said Maxwell L. Anderson, LMI Group's chief operating officer, in a news release. "Through *Elimar*, van Gogh creates a form of spiritual self-portrait, allowing viewers to see the painter as he

wished to be remembered."

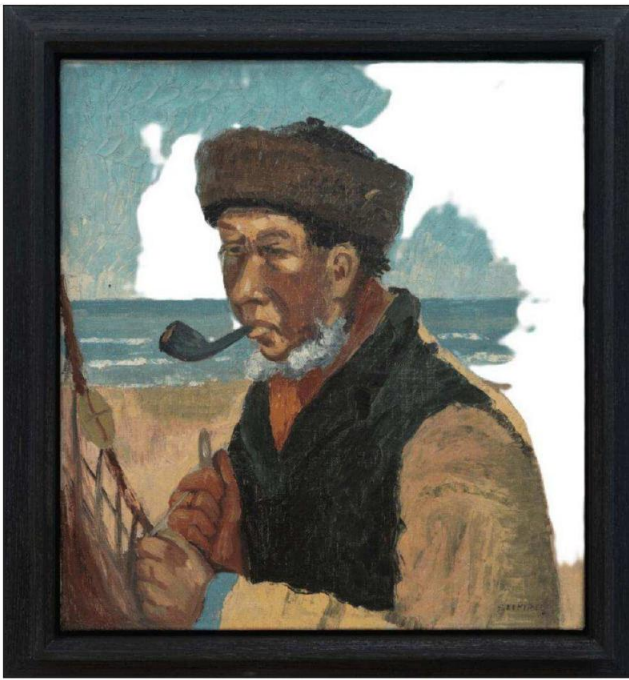
This stupendous claim, bolstered by an extensive report, made headlines around the world and set off a firestorm in the art world.

For many experts, the report is nonsense: the company's methods irregular and its motives obviously selfish. For them, the painting remains just a \$50 yard sale painting from Minnesota.

The case for 'Elimar'

LMI Group's claim that the "Elimar" painting is a genuine van Gogh is drawn from evidence it

VAN GOGH on B11



Courtesy / LMI Group International

This painting was plucked from a Minnesota yard sale for \$50, bearing the enigmatic signature "Elimar." Its new owner, LMI Group International, claims it can prove it was painted by Dutch master Vincent van Gogh in France in 1889.

Accusations and mistrust straining marriage

Dear Annie: I've been with my partner for over 15 years and have helped him build his business from the ground up. I handle everything — paying bills, filing taxes, ordering supplies and assisting customers — often working 70-hour weeks. Despite my dedication, he once accused me of stealing. I proved my innocence, yet he still makes comments that suggest he doesn't trust me.

When he planned to move out (with his mother's help), I filed for divorce. But after speaking to an attorney and realizing he wouldn't receive spousal support, he stayed.

Most recently, after his mother's passing, we received a sympathy card with \$1,500. I suggested a scholarship in her name, but he refused. Later, while discussing her will, he accused me of only caring about money — something he often throws at me whenever finances come up.

I earn a good living and don't need his financial help, but I don't think he should live rent-free. How do I make him see that I'm not "money-hungry" and that his accusations are deeply hurtful? — Glutton for Punishment

Dear Glutton for Punishment: Another



ANNIE LANE

Dear Annie

person's opinion about you is none of your business. He has come to his own conclusions. All you can do is get clear about your intentions regarding money. He is probably really hurting right now because he lost his mother.

Losing a parent can turn someone's world upside down, and grief often affects how people view situations and interact with others. During this difficult time, the best approach is to lead with compassion. Give him space to process his loss while remaining kind and understanding.

Dear Annie: My wife and I have been together for over 35 years. Just five days before Christmas, she abruptly ended our marriage. Her father had passed away a couple of weeks prior, and his funeral was on Dec. 19. Unfortunately, due to a long-term illness that has kept me housebound for years, I wasn't able to attend. My wife knows about my condition, yet she refuses to accept that I physically couldn't be

there.

Now, I feel completely abandoned. No one from her family is speaking to me, and I've been left without any support. I keep wondering — was I truly in the wrong for missing the funeral due to my illness? Should I have risked my health to attend? I'm at a complete loss and struggling to understand what I did wrong. — Complete Loss

Dear Complete Loss: First and foremost, I am so sorry for the loss of your father-in-law. Grief can be incredibly difficult, and I can only imagine how painful this has been for both you and your wife.

When it comes to not attending the funeral, that's a decision best guided by your doctors and your health. I truly doubt that your absence alone was the sole reason for your wife ending the marriage — more likely, it was the tipping point in a larger pattern of issues.

Right now, the best thing you can do is have an open and honest conversation with her. Try to understand what led to this decision and why she feels she needs to leave. While you can't make her stay, you do deserve clarity and an explanation.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

MAGI HELENA

Your Daily Horoscope

BIRTHDAY STAR: Actor Chloe East was born in San Clemente, California, on this date in 2001. This birthday star portrayed Naomi on the series "Generation." She also played Reese Cabrera on "Kevin (Probably) Saves the World" and she's appeared on episodes of "No Good Deed," "Liv and Maddie," and "Ice." East's film resume includes roles in "Heretic," "The Wolf of Snow Hollow," and "Jessica Darling's It List."

ARIES (March 21-April 19): There is no reason to waste time on wishing for what could have or should have happened. If you are too focused on what you're looking for you might overlook what is actually there. Consider focusing on what is within reach and tangible.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Whether you are mesmerized or mystified by someone or something, this might not be the time to make a firm commitment of your time or emotions. You could be blind to someone's faults or afraid to ask appropriate questions to make a decision.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Explore different approaches. You might encounter complex social situations. Keep in mind that pulling one way could make things worse, while pulling another way might ease the tension. Be prepared to shift your strategy when needed.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You may be enthusiastic about group gatherings. However, don't let small irritations derail you, they could be unimportant or even deliberate distractions that keep you from addressing crucial issues concerning important matters.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Remain grounded even though you may be lifted upwards by a

BOUQUET

CONTINUED from B10

founder Kelly Krenzel said of the arrangement. Krenzel started the nonprofit nine years ago in her basement. On Tuesday, Feb. 11, she and her team prepared to deliver flowers to people who have no idea they are getting them.

"I just think it is always those little moments that fill us up,"

Krenzel said.

They all remember the day an elderly man received a jar full of yellow roses.

"He was brought to tears, because it was the same flower he bought his wife every week when they were married and she had since passed, so he received his first bouquet ever and they were this physical form of love," Krenzel said.

And who was the lucky

recipient of that 100,000th bouquet? The big celebration bouquet went to Fargo Elim resident Arlene Keller, who is about to turn 104.

"How are you today?" Krenzel asked Arlene as she came in to surprise her with flowers.

"Pretty good," Arlene said.

Arlene worked as a beautician for years and her late husband, Elmer, loved raising flowers.

"Thank you, this is quite an honor," Arlene said.

As many as 2,500 volunteers show up to put these bouquets together at Hope Blooms. Deliveries are made at least twice a week.

"It is fun working with the flowers, visiting with the people," a volunteer said as she arranged a bouquet.

Not in just nursing homes, but homeless

shelters, mental health hospitals and more. Hard to measure that kind of kindness.

"I think what is unique about Hope Blooms is we have something to celebrate every day," said Katie Gehring, development manager for Hope Blooms.

And Arlene? She was just grateful.

"I never thought I would live this long, and to get flowers. There is

something always to look forward to," Arlene said.

At 103, a reason to celebrate and more.

"Thanks for letting me visit you today," Krenzel said.

Read more about Hope Blooms on their website <https://hopeblooms.org>.

Reach WDAY reporter Kevin Wallevand at kwallevand@wday.com.

VAN GOGH

CONTINUED from B10

compiled in a 458-page report, which it said was the result of \$30,000 in research. In what it said was conclusive proof, it detailed the following evidence:

- **The style:** The classic three-quarter view, the use of the "impasto" technique to thickly layer paint, the colors and tools used, and the fact it was something of a cover-version of another painting, or "translation," all point to Van Gogh's work from his time in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, after he famously cut off his left ear, near the end of his life (1853-1890).

- **The science:** The materials used to make the painting, including canvas and paint, are consistent with those used in the late 19th century, including a pigment from a patent filed in 1883, and incredibly, a single red-brown hair embedded in the painting that is consistent with Van Gogh's own hair.
- **The details:** Van Gogh never signed his paintings, "Elimar" was a character in a story by one of his favorite authors, the painted word is very similar to Van Gogh's other painted writing, the cross carving fit with the artist's growing religiosity, an underlying painting may be a



Courtesy / Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

"Self-Portrait with Grey Felt Hat," Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890), Paris, September-October 1887.

woman with whom he was in a relationship, and he often painted laborers.

The doubts

While many in the art world are excited about the potential find of a never-before-known work by Van Gogh, many others are dismissing the painting as a work by the Dutch master, including most notably the Van Gogh Museum.

The museum rejected the painting as authentic when the original purchaser apparently

checked in, in 2019.

"We have carefully examined the material you supplied to us and are of the opinion, based on stylistic features, that your work cannot be attributed to Vincent van Gogh," it said then. It reiterated its position after the LMI Group report.

The company said it was "puzzled" the museum made its determination without examining the painting in person. But many others in the art world have spoken up,



Courtesy / Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
"Wheatfield under Thunderclouds," by Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890), Auvers-sur-Oise, July 1890.

pointing out holes and weaknesses in LMI Group's claims. They include:

- **The inconsistencies:** The painting's brushwork and the "impasto" technique aren't consistent with van Gogh's known works.
- **The name:** 'Elimar' could be the name of the painting's actual artist, a little-known Danish painter named Henning Elimar, and its style matches some of Elimar's work. (LMI Group says the painting was made before Elimar was active and the signature doesn't match.)
- **The source material:** There are questions about whether van Gogh would have been familiar with the supposed source material for his "translation" during his time at Saint-Rémy-de-Provence.
- **The myth of the 'flea**

market find:' Art appraisers and museums are routinely inundated by people claiming to have found a Rembrandt or a van Gogh or a Picasso in a local garage sale, flea market or attic. These claims are almost universally debunked, although there are exceptions.

Meanwhile in Minnesota

Back in Minnesota, the news of a potential van Gogh discovered in their own back yard has excited a lot of folks, even as they too are uncertain as to the painting's exact provenance.

"When a Van Gogh painting purportedly was found, essentially, in our backyard, it really caught my attention," Robert Snell, co-owner and fine arts specialist for Revere Auctions, an auction house based in St. Paul,

told KARE11 news.

"We have had several patrons of the arts, here in Minnesota, that did purchase really, really amazing objects. James J Hill, T.B. Walker, and they did buy from one of the most reputable art dealers in France, who did handle van Gogh's work," Snell said. "So it is possible that one of those people purchased the work and it ended up in one of their homes and it kind of got lost and somehow ended up at this garage sale."

While the mysterious buyer (and seller) haven't identified themselves, doing so would go a long way toward explaining how exactly "Elimar" found its way to the land of 10,000 lakes, only to be plucked from obscurity.

Contact Fugleberg at jfugleberg@forumcomm.com.

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