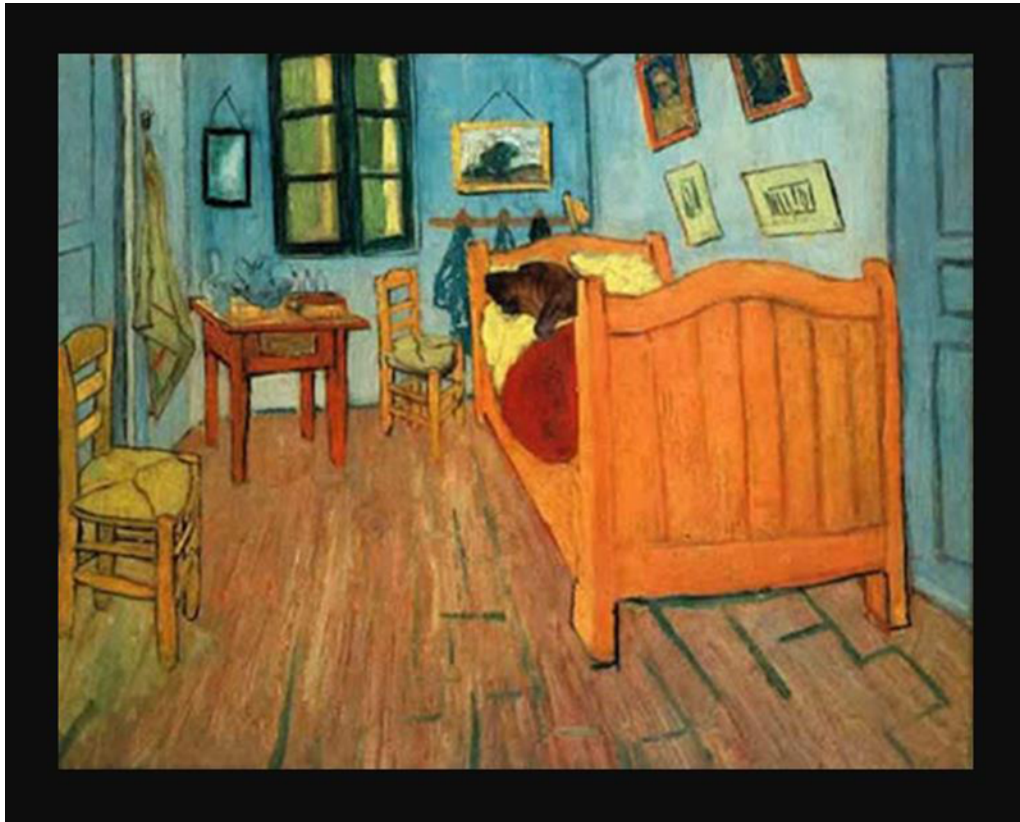
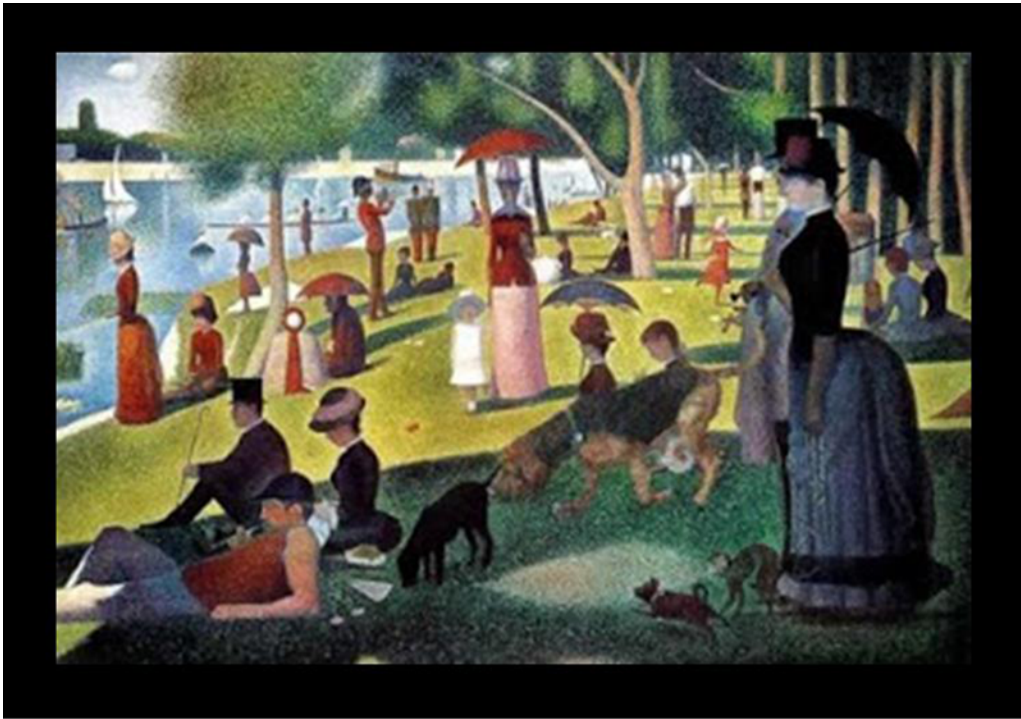


The Birth of Venus (Sandro Botticelli, 1483, Uffizi Museum, Florence). This painting was probably created for Botticelli's good pal Lorenzo de Medici (the model was said to be a woman of whom he was enamored) and is a departure from the classical realism of other Renaissance artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael—see how Venus' neck is anatomically too long and her left shoulder is a little weird. The painting also lacks depth and looks a bit flat. This may be because Botticelli was trying to invoke ancient Greek art but truth be told, he never really embraced the realism of his age. To Venus's left we see the winds blowing her hair, to the right we see a maid waiting to dress her and at her feet we see violets, a symbol of love. But although lovely, don't you think Venus looks very lonely up there, gazing wistfully out from her shell? As the symbol of human beauty does she not yearn to be joined by an equal paragon of canine beauty? So here I have thoughtfully pushed her aside to make room for an exquisitely luminescent Hound. (*"The Birth of Venus and Her Gorgeous Hound"*).



Our next painting takes us to the South of France—Arles to be exact where master Dutch (how do you say bloodhound in Dutch, I wonder?) postimpressionist Vincent Van Gogh painted a picture of his bedroom in his beloved yellow house that he rented in Arles. **Bedroom in Arles** (Vincent Van Gogh, 1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam). Van Gogh's beautiful use of line reminds of us of his reputation as a great draftsman. Indeed the artist refused to paint until he felt that he had mastered the art of drawing. Van Gogh created three almost identical versions of this painting and this was the first one. He wanted to create a community of artists in Arles and the yellow house was to be its foundation. Van Gogh (a father of expressionism) hoped to express rest, tranquility and solidity in this simple room. But see how much more serene and peaceful the scene

looks with a solid, snoozing (and no doubt rhythmically snoring), Hound occupying the bed! And notice how the lovely color of the Hound complements the strong, bright colors of the room! Now it really looks like van Gogh could get an excellent night's rest while waiting for his BFF Gauguin to arrive. ("*Wimsey's Bedroom Arles*").



Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte, (Georges Seurat, 1864, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago). This is one of the most famous pictures painted in the pointillist style—pointillists believed that their optical theories, which involved painting using dots would make colors more brilliant than using regular brush strokes. In this painting Seurat, one of the great pointillists, concentrates on color, light and above all, form. He wanted his contemporary figures from a suburban Parisian park to seem as solid and monumental as those on an ancient frieze. But there seems to be a jarring, empty space in the middle of the painting, which I think detracts from its splendor. See how the presence of a Hound immediately creates more visual interest and a focal point (as Hounds always do) for the painting. ("*Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Wimsey*").