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The Santier case: suspect under arrest!

Barely six weeks after the discovery of the body of Armand Santier in the Bois de Bologne, police have arrested Vieri Naudet, of Avenue Veuxencore, in the sixth Arrondissement, for transporting the dead body of Mr. Santier from his apartment on Rue Laval in the wee hours of Saturday 15 May. Mr. Santier appears to have been poisoned.

Medical science and forensic experts are as yet unable to establish the exact scenario which led to Mr. Santier's ingesting of the ammonium biclorathinate found in his studio. What they suspect, and something which only Mr. Naudet can confirm, is that Mr. Naudet encouraged the depressed Mr. Santier to drink up, with the expectation that his considerable collection of Santier's work would be worth more with the painter dead than alive.

Police are praising the Dutch painter, Vincent Van Gogh, who came forward two weeks ago to point out that news of the signed painting found near the body of his friend was clearly evidence of wrong-doing of some kind. "Even though he was a terrible housekeeper, Armand was very sensitive to the slightest imperfections in his paintings. He never signed his work, most certainly NOT in white

on a Veronese green ground!" the artist stormed. It was when police turned to Mr. Van Gogh for expert analysis of the photos taken at the scene (where Mr. Santier's body was discovered), that the pieces of the puzzle began to come together.

"But where are the palette knives!?!?" was Mr. Van Gogh's first reaction. "Armand never worked without them. Jamais!! And this palette? These colors are not right. This is not Armand's!! Do you see – it was not used for this painting! It is all wrong! Yes, yes! I mean, Non, non!!! This painting was not made here! Do you see? There is no mark of the outdoor easel. Someone has made theatre here!! Pauvre Armand. He is an acteur in this play, but it is not one of his own making."

Police suspect that Mr. Santier, despairing at the Salon's rejection of his painting, feverishly began working in his studio the afternoon of Friday, May 14. It was then that Mr. Naudet popped in to see him (a fact that Mr. Guy Sensrat, patron of the Café des Artistes, confirms. He testified that Mr. Naudet, upon hearing the result of the Salon's decision, downed two kir royales, and said he was off to see how Armand was taking the news). Mr. Naudet's visit

ended in Mr. Santier's death, whereupon Mr. Naudet signed the painting found on the easel near the body to generate greater publicity more quickly. Mr. Naudet, no artist himself, grabbed some other items found in the apartment (a dry palette from another painting, paintbrushes and an outdoor easel) to set the scene.

Once satisfied with his pre-dawn mischief, he wrote a note and dispatched a local urchin to go to the police with the anonymous note.

Investigators are still looking at the possibility that this is a case of pre-meditated murder, by carefully reviewing notes drawn up by members of the Salon jury. It is feared that the painting found near the body was NOT the painting in the jury show, but a slightly larger sketch which was already in the hands of Mr. Naudet. The original may well be that which is currently on sale chez Mr. Pere Malgras. The painting has been secured by the authorities who are examining whether there are incriminating traces or residue of a Salon Refusal sticker.

~submitted by Nora Dempsey