# PAUL GAUGUIN'S HIGH YELLOW NOTE: *THE VOLPINI SUITE*

**by**

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## Abstract

With the *Volpini Suite*, a portfolio of ten zincographs and a signed frontispiece printed on large sheets of canary yellow paper, Gauguin created a visual resumé of his career as an artist, an advertisement of his subject matter and style. The prints were first shown in an exhibition of the "Groupe Impressioniste et Synthétiste" held at Monsieur Volpini's Café des arts on the grounds of the Exposition Universelle in 1889. Although the body of literature on Gauguin's art is vast, the *Volpini Suite*, the artist's first series of prints, has been neglected, particularly when compared to his series of woodcuts chronicling his first Tahitian sojourn, *Noa Noa*, made in 1893-4. In this study, I argue that making the *Volpini Suite* marked a critical moment in Gauguin's artistic evolution. Working in a graphic format for the first time, Gauguin simplified his style, flattened his forms, shifted from an art that was largely influenced by Impressionism to the style that has become associated with his mature art of the South Seas. In short, the *Volpini Suite* was crucial to Gauguin's artistic development.

I begin the dissertation with an examination of the lithographic the print portfolio in late nineteenth-century Paris, and focus on Gauguin's decision to embark upon the project of printmaking, which was prompted by Theo van Gogh. Chapter Two is devoted to a discussion of the eleven zincographs, examining their iconography, connections to related paintings, drawings, ceramics, and wood-carvings, and their descriptions of the exotic locales of Pont-Aven, Le Pouldu, Martinique, and Arles that were essential to the artist's early career. Chapter Three investigates the artist's bold choice of printing the *Volpini Suite* on canary yellow sheets, each measuring approximately 50 x 65 cm. Chapter Four explores Emile Bernard's portfolio of zincographs, *Les Bretonneries*, on

view alongside the *Volpini Suite* at the exhibition at the Café des arts. Finally, I examine the legacy of the *Volpini Suite* and its influence on the prints of the Pont-Aven School and the Nabis, the early paintings and prints of Aristide Maillol, and the lithographs of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

## Acknowledgements

This project grew out of a fascination with prints that was initiated in 1996 when I began to supervise the Print Room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Several years later, when I moved to Ohio to work in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Cleveland Museum of Art, I was thrilled to discover a complete set of the *Volpini Suite* on untrimmed, yellow sheets. I began this project with a desire to untangle the puzzles of Gauguin's neglected first set of prints, and to track down all of the hand-colored impressions of the Suite. As I continued to investigate the prints, I began to see them within a larger context of the artist's early work in several media and to recognize the impact that the prints had upon Gauguin's Tahitian oeuvre, and upon the artists who followed in his wake.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Patricia Mainardi. Her meticulous commentary has enhanced the quality of this study immeasurably. Much of what is valuable in this dissertation I owe to her patience and encouragement.

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Chapter Three examines the extraordinary paper upon which Gauguin printed the *Volpini Suite*. My research in this area was infinitely aided by Moyna Stanton, Paper Conservator at the Cleveland Museum of Art, and by Peter Bower, Paper Historian and Analyst, London. I thank them both for the expertise, interest, and tenacity that they have brought to the prints.

Scrutinizing prints by Gauguin, the Pont-Aven School, the Nabis, and Kirchner has been an essential aspect of this project. A generous travel grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation provided funds for research in Amsterdam, Paris, Brittany, Lausanne, and Stuttgart. I am grateful to Daniel Morane at the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie

Jacques Doucet, Paris for an afternoon spent examining Emile Bernard's hand-colored zincographs. Likewise, I am endebted to Samuel Josefowitz with whom I spent a memorable day in Lausanne, Switzerland looking at his extraordinary collection of Pont-Aven prints and paintings. I also thank Dr. Ulrike Gauss who allowed me to examine Kirchner's lithographs on yellow paper at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. I am grateful to Susan Welsh Reed and Roy Perkinson at for enabling me to linger over the marvelous hand-colored impressions of the *Volpini Suite* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and for their interest in this project.

I visited the Van Gogh Museum in order to examine their recently-acquired *Volpini Suite* and hand-colored impression of *Dramas of the Sea: the Maelstrom*. At that time, serendipity introduced me to Agnieszka Juszczak whose obsession with the prints and enthusiasm for this project has equaled my own. Our conversations about the prints have been numerous and her exuberance boundless. At the Van Gogh Museum I also acknowledge Edwin Becker, Sjraar van Heughten, John Leighton, Chris Stolwijk, and Marije Vellekoop for their continued support of my research. A paper entitled "Gauguin's Immersion *In the Waves*," which grew out of Chapter Two, will be published in *Van Gogh Studies* in the winter of 2006 thanks to Chris Stolwijk, the editor of the journal. Currently, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Van Gogh Museum are planning an exhibition on the *Volpini Suite* and Gauguin's related works to be shown in both museums in 2009.

Friends and colleagues have helped in numerous ways throughout this project. I thank Kathrin Beer, Françoise Cachin, Phillip Dennis Cate, Dr. Mary Weaver Chapin, Dr. Jay Clarke, Carter Foster, Dr. Anne Helmreich, Lynda Klitch, Julie Melby, Dr. Valerie

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As this project developed, I tried out my ideas in several venues and received helpful feedback and criticism in each of them. Most valuable were my experiences at conferences of the College Art Association, the Print Council of America, the Midwest Art History Society, and The Frick Symposium.

In the conventional order of acknowledgements, one's family generally comes last, but their roles have been far from the least significant. I would like to thank my parents whose support of this project and of my entire education has been continuous. Finally, I acknowledge Calvin Brown for being essential to my happiness and for giving me the courage to lead the life I have chosen.

## Table of Contents

# Illustrations

**Chapter Five**

## Introduction: Lithography and the Print Portfolio in Nineteenth-Century France

### Print Portfolios of the Nineteenth-Century

During the winter of 1889 in Paris, Gauguin executed a suite of eleven zincographs that became known as the *Volpini Suite*, because they were first exhibited on the grounds of the Exposition Universelle at the Café des arts owned by Monsieur Volpini. Gauguin's portfolio was printed in the atelier of Edouard Ancourt in Paris, the most highly skilled professional printer of lithographs in late nineteenth-cenutry Paris who was later to be employed by artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec and Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947).[1] With the *Volpini Suite*, Gauguin created a self-portrait in eleven prints, a visual resumé of his professional career as an artist, an advertisement of his subject matter and style. The suite is comprised of ten zincographs and a signed frontispiece printed on large sheets of canary yellow paper measuring approximately 49.8 x 64.8 cm.

In creating a portfolio of original lithographs, Gauguin subscribed to a tradition of printmaking that by 1889 was firmly established in France. Before examining his reasons for making the *Volpini Suite* and the iconography of the prints, it is important to acknowledge the artistic tradition out of which he evolved—namely the practice of producing portfolios of limited-edition prints marketed to aspiring art collectors.

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[1] In the first catalogue raisonné on Gauguin's prints Marcel Guérin stated: "According to Sérusier's memoirs, the series of zincographs on yellow paper was printed by Ancourt, the lithographic printer who printed most of Toulouse-Lautrec's lithographs." Marcel Guérin, *L'Oeuvre gravé de Gauguin* (Paris: H. Floury, 1927), 1:5. "La série des zincographies sur papier jaune fut, d'après les souvenirs de M. Sérusier, tirée par Ancourt, imprimeur-lithographie qui tira la plupart des lithographies de Toulouse-Lautrec."

Alois Senefelder (1771-1834) invented lithography in Munich in 1798.[2] Not an artist himself, Senefelder developed lithography as a way of printing music more cheaply than engraving. In intaglio processes such as etching and engraving, copper plates wore down relatively quickly, but the limestone used in the newly invented planographic process could generate many more impressions of consistent quality than could a metal plate, and the chemical process of etching the stone made the design extremely durable. Senefelder quickly recognized the medium's artistic potential and went into business with several partners to operate lithographic presses in the capitals of Europe. *The Specimens of Polyautography* (polyautography being the first name for lithography) was the first portfolio of artistic lithographs, and was published in two installments in England in 1803-1806. The complete portfolio consisted of twelve pen and ink lithographs and included landscapes and figure studies by numerous well-known artists of the day including Thomas Stothard (1755-1825), Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), and Richard Cooper (1740-after 1814). The expatriate painter, Benjamin West (1738-1820), then president of the Royal Academy, contributed *The Angel of the Resurrection*, 1801, the earliest dated lithograph by an artist. The designs included in *The Specimens* were simple pen and ink studies drawn on stone just as if it had been paper. This basic process was soon surpassed as various methods were invented, each achieving strikingly different effects. Artists used lithographic crayons, scratched into the stone to create texture, and eventually mastered

[2] Michael Twyman's books on lithography are the best accounts of the history of the medium. Michael Twyman, *Lithography 1800-1850* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) and Michael Twyman, *Breaking the Mould: The First Hundred Years of Lithography* (London: The British Library, 2001). Also see Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers, *La Pierre parle: Lithography in France 1848-1900* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1981).

the printing of delicate washes of tusche, or liquid ink which created the effect of wash drawings.

Not surprisingly, the center of lithography in the first decades of the nineteenth century was in Germany. One of the masterpieces of the period was a portfolio by the Nazarene, Ferdinand Johann Heinrich von Olivier (1785-1841), *Seven Places in Salzburg and Berchtesgaden Arranged According to the Seven Days of the Week (Seben Gegenden aus Salzburg und Berchtesgaden. Geordnet nach die Sieben Tagen der Woche)*, 1823. His series of seven lithographs wove together the essential threads of German Romantic art—spiritualized landscape, medievalism and religious imagery. Olivier based his designs on studies made during two trips to the Tyrolean Alps. In the suite, he used the days of the week to represent cycles of growth and decay, the stages of human life and the Passion of Christ.

In England, the suite of lithographs by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824), *Various Subjects Drawn from Life on Stone*, better known as the *English Suite*, a portfolio of twelve lithographs made in London in 1821 during the artist's tour with his painting *Raft of the Medusa,* was another important early example of the medium. In the suite, Géricault portrayed London street-life, and contrasted vignettes of a blind piper, a beggar, and a paralyzed woman being transported in a wheelchair, with scenes of farriers and infantrymen. The *English Suite* is truly a masterpiece of early lithography. In the frontispiece, Géricault utilized pen lithography similar to that of the *Specimens of Polyautography*, but in the following plates with chalk lithography he achieved an impressive array of subtle grays ranging to the deepest black. To create highlights and

detail, he sometimes scratched away the chalk, creating patterns of fine, white lines within the designs.

By the 1820s, the chalk manner of lithography, utilized by most of the leading artists of the early nineteenth century, had been perfected. By 1828 in Paris, in the district of the Seine alone there were twenty-four printing houses containing 180 presses and employing 420 workmen.[3] Much of the work that these presses produced was reproductive, but nevertheless, the sophistication of the medium was growing by leaps and bounds. An examination of the lithographs exhibited in the Paris salons between 1817 and 1824 reveals a rapid progression from the tentative and coarse beginnings of the medium to astonishing works of technical virtuosity.[4] Charles Hullmandel's book, *The Art of Drawing on Stone*, 1824 was a landmark in the history of the medium. Many perceived the ease with which lithography adapted to a diversity of styles as a weakness and considered lithography a degraded art. In his book, Hullmandel argued against this opinion and stressed the high quality of many artists' original lithographs. His technical explanations were extraordinarily precise and had an enormous impact on the development of lithography in England.

Lithography began to flourish in France after 1820. The first major work of lithography in France, known *as Picturesque and Romantic Journeys in Old France (Voyages pittoresques and romantiques dans l'ancienne France)*, began publication in 1820. Jointly sponsored by French novelist and poet Charlies Nodier, French author

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[3] Twyman*, Lithography 1800-1850*, 56.

[4] For a discussion of lithography of the period, see William McAllister Johnson, *French Lithography: The Restoration Salons, 1817-1824* (Kingston, Ontario: Agnes Etherington Art Center, 1977).

Alphonse de Cailleux, and Belgian-born author and theater administrator Isidore-Justin-Séverin Taylor, the series was intended to document a romantic, idealized vision of the architecture and countryside of France that seemed increasingly to be giving way to industrialization. The popular series ceased publication only after the twenty-fifth volume was published in 1879. Also in France, Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) followed Géricault as a painter-printmaker, working in both intaglio and planographic techniques. Delacroix made some of the most memorable lithographs of the period, including lithographic illustrations of *Faust*, 1828 and *Hamlet*, 1835. The four scenes of bull-fights by Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) known as *The Bulls of Bordeaux*, 1825 made toward the end of the artist's life when he was in exile, is another example of the golden age of lithography. Startlingly modern, the execution of *The Bulls of Bordeaux* is loose and free; wild audiences encroach upon the ring, gesticulating and jeering at the spectacle below. This series of lithographs would have great impact on subsequent generations, particularly upon Edouard Manet.

After the 1830s, however, lithography was used mainly for commercial purposes, primarily as a result of further technical advances.[5] The high Victorian period saw a flood of color lithographs, primarily for book illustrations or collectable portfolios of reproductions. Known as chromolithographs, these illustrations were printed with immense skill; designs of eight or ten colors were often printed from twenty or more

[5] Caricatures such as those of Honoré Daumier and Paul Gavarni, published in journals such as *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari* throughout the middle of the nineteenth century are exceptions.

stones.[6] Artists were put off by the medium's increasing connotations of commercialism and few artistic lithographs were produced in mid-century.

In 1862, during a time when printmaking had in many ways become synonymous with reproductive etching and engraving, Alfred Cadart established the Society of Etchers (Société des aquafortistes) in order to promote the concept of the original print, or the "belle épreuve."[7] Together with the printer Auguste Delâtre, Cadart published five albums entitled *Eaux-fortes modernes* over a period of five years. Each album, containing sixty original prints and five etchings selected by a jury of subscribers, was distributed monthly to the members of the society. By publishing only "oeuvres originales" Cadart sought to attract established painters to etching and to invigorate the concept of the peintre-graveur as exemplified by Rembrandt. Cadart's albums included etchings by artists such as Félix Bracquemond (1833-1914), Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), Camille Corot (1796-1875), Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878), Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819-1891), James-Abott McNeill Whistler, Seymour Haden (1818-1910), and Charles Meryon (1821-1868). Cadart also published single-artist portfolios, including two by Edouard Manet (1832-1883). From 1863-1867, the Société published five portfolios of approximately sixty etchings of a variety of subjects. Landscape was the

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[6] The term 'chromolithograph' did not become derisive until the 1890s when artists such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Edouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, inspired by Japanese woodblock prints, began making their own color lithographs using flat forms with a superbly decorative sense of design.

[7] For the definitive study of the Société des aquafortistes see Janine Bailly-Herzberg, *L'Eau-forte de peintre au dix-neuvième siècle: la société des aquafortistes (1862-1867)*, vols. 1-2 (Paris: Léonce Laget, 1972). Also see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Etching Renaissance in France: 1850-1880* (Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 1971), Michel Melot, *Graphic Art of the Pre-Impressionists*, trans. Robert Erich Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1980), and Eugenia Parry Janis, "Setting the Tone—The Revival of Etching, The Importance of Ink," in Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Painterly Print: Monotypes from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980).

subject that prevailed, but genre and animal subjects also proliferated in the albums. Within each album, Cadart published a preface, by authors such as Théophile Gautier, Jules Janin, William Bürger (Etienne Joseph Théophile Thoré), Jules-Antoine Castagnary, and Eugène Montrosier, lauding both etching and the aims of the Société. Others published articles in praise of the effort including Maxime Lalanne whose *Traité de la gravure à l'eau forte* of 1866 was one the period's most influential treatises on etching, Lalanne encouraged artists of his day to emulate Rembrandt, who pulled his own proofs rather than leaving the task up to an indifferent printer. Auguste Delâtre (1822-1907) was considered the ultimate printer of intaglio prints in Paris and was regarded by artists as an inspired technical genius. Delâtre used a process that he called "retroussage," a wiping gesture that left a veil of ink on the plate, producing an etching that had a rich, soft appearance resembling a drypoint. The technique was, of course, effective for only one impression and had to be meticulously repeated for the entire edition. The etching revival was backward-looking, taking Rembrandt as its inspiration, but it was also innovative in its emphasis on artistic process and in that its proponents sought ways to express the Impressionist concerns of shifting light, weather conditions, and times of day in their etchings. Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier, who admired Goya's etchings and helped make them more widely known in France, enthusiastically supported the initiatives of the Société.

Although he succeeded in bringing about an etching revival in France, Cadart was less successful in reviving lithography, despite his efforts.[8] He gave lithographic stones to

[8] For literature on lithographs of this period, see Domenico Porzio, ed., *Lithography: 200 Years of Art, History, and Technique*, trans. Geoffrey Culverwell (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1982) and Michel Melot, *The Impressionist Print*, trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).

five artists—Edouard Manet (1832-1883), Félix Bracquemond (1833-1914), Alphonse Legros (1837-1911), Théodule Ribot (1823-1891), and Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904)—but the resulting lithographs were not published, and there was scant public enthusiasm for the medium's artistic capacity primarily because of the stigma attached to its connection with commercial printing.

It was not until the mid-1870s that a French artist was able to see past the medium's commercial connotations, and once again appreciate lithography's artistic potential. In 1875, Manet made a series of six pen and ink lithographs to accompany Stéphane Mallarmé's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven*. Manet had long been an admirer of Poe; one of his first prints was an etched portrait of the poet based on a daguerreotype, possibly intended to illustrate an edition of Baudelaire's articles on Poe. Mallarmé who taught English for a living, began his translations of Poe's poetry as early as 1862, but it was not until 1875 that they were first published. He and Manet met in 1873 and the artist and the Symbolist poet became lifelong friends. The collaborative project for an illustrated edition of Mallarmé's translation of *The Raven* was probably conceived in late 1874 or early 1875. Manet searched through the poem for moments that could best be translated into visual motifs. The four lithographic illustrations are entirely original, lacking parallels either to older art or to any aspect of Manet's own art. The fourth and last lithograph, *That Shadow that Lies Floating on the Floor* (figure I.1) is remarkable for both its economy and its suggestiveness. In this image, the poet, the protagonist in the first three compositions, has disappeared, and dark shadow of the raven is cast across the floor dominating the composition, an ominous presence in the cavernous, empty room.

Although Manet's illustrations for Mallarmé's *The Raven* were not commercially successful, this publication helped revive the medium among artists.[9] Until the 1870s, critics as well as artists had vilified lithography as non-artistic, commercial and reproductive. Manet's open-minded approach toward printmaking and its capacity to promote an artist's reputation contributed to redeeming lithography's artistic potential.[10] Manet's use of lithography to illustrate a French Symbolist poet's translation of American poetry was strikingly innovative, as were many aspects of his self-promotion and artistic practice. When Manet died in 1883, Gauguin was still an amateur artist. Nonetheless, Gauguin sought to emulate some of the more audacious aspects of Manet's career, including staging his own exhibition alongside an Exposition Universelle and offering for sale prints that reinterpreted his compositions in oil. I would argue that Manet's posthumous reputation played an important role in Gauguin's fashioning of his own artistic identity. Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* has been called the most important portfolio of prints of late nineteenth-century France, after Manet's *The Raven*.[11] I would

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[9] For essays on Manet's *Le Corbeau*, see Jay McKean Fisher, "Manet's Illustrations for 'The Raven': Alternatives to Traditional Lithography," in Pat Gilmour ed., *Lasting Impressions: Lithography as Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 91-109; and Melissa De Mederios, ""A New Order of Beauty"—Manet, Mallarmé, and Poe," in Jane Mayo Roos et. al., *Stéphane Mallarmé: A Painter's Poet* (New York: Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1999), 61-67.

[10] Phillip Dennis Cate points out that by working in almost every genre of printed image that was available to progressive artists of the 1890s—the poster, the music-sheet cover, multi-artist albums, single-artist albums, book covers and text illustrations—Manet had paved the way for artists of the next generation. Phillip Dennis Cate, Gale B. Murray, and Richard Thomson, *Prints Abound: Paris in the 1890s* (Washington, D. C.: The National Gallery of Art, 2000), 15.

[11] Ibid., 15.

argue that Gauguin recognized *The Raven's* use of lithography as revelatory and that this suite contributed to his desire to begin printmaking.[12]

By 1875 Manet was not a newcomer to printmaking. In 1862 Alfred Cadart had published a portfolio of eight Manet's etchings plus a title page which included *The Spanish Singer, The Little Cavaliers (after Velasquez)*, *Philip IV (after Velasquez), The Espada, The Absinthe Drinker, The Toilette, The Boy with a Dog,* and *The Urchin/The Little Girl*. Part of the portfolio's role was to announce and advertise Manet's paintings on view both at Louis Martinet's newly opened gallery on the Boulevard des Italiens in March 1863, and at the Salon des Refusés. Portfolios like these were not uncommon even before Cadart founded his business and the Société des aquafortistes; Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856), Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878), Paul Huet (1803-1869) and Charles Meryon (1821-1868) had all published print portfolios previously.

It was not unheard of for the artists' etchings of this period to be printed on colored papers—often blue or blue-green—and for an artist-designed illustrated cover to be used as a portfolio wrapper and folded around the prints.[13] Although the Cadart portfolio of Manet's prints was not printed on colored papers, other etchings, such as *Don Mariano Camprubi (The Ballet Dancer)*, incorporated color into its design; the Dumont edition of this etching was printed in dark brown ink on blue-green paper.[14] Gauguin

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[12] Manet was not merely an artistic mentor of Gauguin's youth. During the winter of 1890-91 in Paris, Gauguin painted a copy of Manet's *Olympia*, which, since November 1890, had been installed in the Musée de Luxembourg. Gauguin's copy was purchased by Degas in 1895 in the auction organized to help fund Gauguin's final trip to the South Seas.

[13] Jay McKean Fisher, *The Prints of Edouard Manet* (Washington, D.C.: International Exhibitions Foundation, 1985), 53.

[14] Ibid., 62.

would have been well aware of the tradition of printing etchings on subtly colored papers; with his decision to use canary yellow paper for his first print portfolio he simultaneously acknowledged tradition and asserted his own creativity and radicalism.

The parallels between Cadart's album of Manet's prints and Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* are numerous. Manet's etchings, or "autograph reproductions," were part of the Société's strategy of furthering the careers of promising young artists at the beginning of their careers while simultaneously serving an artistic community devoted to the revival of etchings.[15] Twenty-six years after the publication of Cadart's portfolio of Manet's prints, Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* was made with similar goals. While no longer exactly young, in making the prints Gauguin was seeking to promote himself and his career which was just reaching maturity. Like Cadart, Theo van Gogh who encouraged Gauguin to take up printmaking, was interested in raising lithography out of the confines of commercialism and into the realm of art. Similar as well was the exotic subject matter of Manet and Gauguin's first portfolios. Five of Manet's etchings were devoted either to Spanish themes or drew from Spanish sources, although such subject matter was in keeping with the "hispanophilia" of the period. The subject matter of Gauguin's portfolio, at least on one level, was based on his travel to locales outside of Paris and his focus on the "primitiveness" of other cultures in Brittany, Martinique, and even Arles. In making the *Volpini Suite* at a critical juncture in his career—when he was seeking to be recognized as a serious artist to be contended with alongside the likes of Seurat and the Neo-Impressionists—I would argue that in certain ways Gauguin was following the path initiated by Manet.

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[15] Carol Armstrong has written eloquently on Manet's prints. See Carol Amstrong, *Manet Manette* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002), 77.

By the late 1880s, lithography's identity had been transformed. In part, this was because during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in France institutional systems of promotion and support of the arts had become increasingly inadequate for artists. The Third Republic relinquished its authority over the Salon in 1880 and jurisdiction was handed over to the newly-founded Society of French Artists, which did not welcome modernist art.[16] In the face of this situation, artists began looking to nontraditional and nonacademic ways of promoting themselves and their art. This period contributed to the rise of independent art dealers as well as the expanding print market. Single and multi-artist print portfolios that were affordable and accessible became one method that artists used to promote themselves and to raise capital. The 1880s and 1890s saw a steadily increasing supply of artists' portfolios as well as a demand that justified such production.

In 1888, the Society of the Original Print (La Société de l'estampe originale) was founded, and the following year saw the group's first exhibition of works by "peintres-graveurs," artist-printmakers, as distinguished from reproductive or commercial printers. In 1888 and 1889, Auguste Lepère published two multi-artist albums of ten prints each entitled *L'Estampe originale* (not to be confused with André Marty's larger and more important print publication of 1890-1895 of the same title).[17] While advocating the artistic significance of printmaking in general, Lepère's goal was to promote the

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[16] For an analysis of the Salon and its eventual demise during the Third Republic, see Patricia Mainardi, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[17] For literature on *l'Estampe originale*, see Donna M. Stein and Donald H. Karshan*, L'Estampe originale: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: The Museum of Graphic Art, 1970); Jacqueline Baas, "The Origins of l'Estampe originale," *Bulletin of the University of Michigan Museums of Art and Archeology*, vol. 5 (1983): 12-27; Patricia Eckert Boyer and Phillip Dennis Cate, *L'Estampe originale: Artistic Printmaking in France 1893-1895* (Zwolle and Amsterdam: Waanders Publishers and Van Gogh Museum, 1991).

"original" limited-edition print, so-called because the print was based on an original design rather than reproducing a painting. Although Lepère's two albums were neither financially successful nor artistically groundbreaking, conceptually they were important, and they set the stage for the 1890s, which were to see a proliferation of print portfolios.[18]

The opening of the first Exposition de peintres-graveurs at Durand Ruel's gallery on January 23, 1889 was a milestone in the evolution of nineteenth- century French printmaking. The formation of the Société des peintres-graveurs had been influenced by the Sociète des aquafortistes of the 1860s; the two groups' aims were similar, although the later society did not limit itself to one technique of printmaking. Bracquemond together with Edgar Degas (1834-1917), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), and Redon joined the critic Philippe Burty and the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in organizing an exhibition intended to promote printmaking among collectors and elevate the reputations of printmakers.[19] This exhibition signaled a revival not only of lithography and etching, but of all techniques of printmaking in France in the 1890s. [20]

The artists who exhibited in the first exhibition of the Peintres-graveurs represented a variety of schools ranging from conservative, academic artists to Impressionists. Bracquemond, a champion of mid-century printmaking, submitted

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[18] Boyer and Cate, *l'Estampe originale: Artistic Printmaking in France 1893-1895*, 11-12.

[19] For a discussion of the six exhibitions of the Société des peintres-graveurs francais, held between 1889 and 1897 and the revival or original printmaking in France in the 1890s, see Lindsay Leard, "The Société des Peintres-Graveurs: Printmaking, 1889-1897" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1992).

[20] For Theo's response to the exhibition, see Theo van Gogh, *Brief Happiness: The Correspondence of Theo van Gogh and Jo Bonger*, trans. Yvette Rosenberg and Kate Williams (Amsterdam and Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum and Waanders, 1999), 108.

pastels, watercolors and a number of rare proofs of his etchings to the exhibition. Bracquemond had encouraged Gauguin to make ceramics several years earlier, which Gauguin had done with idiosyncratic and highly expressive results. It is likely that Bracquemond also encouraged Gauguin's printmaking efforts. Redon, encouraged by Stéphane Mallarmé, submitted *À Gustave Flaubert*, a series of six lithographs and a frontispiece inspired by Flaubert's novel *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (*Tentation de Saint-Antoine*) to the exhibition. Degas submitted only two lithographs, including *Nude Woman at the Door of her Room* (*Femme nue à la porte de sa chambre)*, 1879. Degas executed the original design as a monotype, but transferred the print onto a lithographic stone and reworked the composition, using a crayon and scraper extensively to make the generalized forms of the monotype more specific and detailed in the lithograph. In a review of the exhibition, Félix Féneon wrote:

> Mr. Degas nonchalantly exhibits a small lithograph whose savage artistry is astounding. Her long hair falling down her back, the nude woman, aching all over or half asleep leaves her room. And everything—the woman disappearing, the unmade bed, the downy easy-chair—bears the mysterious imprint of Degas.[21]

Such a lithograph would have appealed to Gauguin and inspired him to try his hand as a peintre-graveur.

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[21] Félix Féneon, "Les Peintres-graveurs," *La Cravache* (Feb. 2, 1889) reprinted in Jean Paulhan, ed., *Les Œuvres de Félix Féneon* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 165. "M. Degas expose négligemment une petite lithographie dont la sauvage saveur d'art étourdit. La chevelure sur le dos, une femme nue, courbaturée ou mal éveillée, émigre de sa chambre. Et n'importe quoi, la femme disparaissante, le lit découvert, le pelucheux crapaud, porte la mystérieuse marque de Degas."

**The Influence of Theo van Gogh on Gauguin**

Theo van Gogh had a role to play in the development of the market for original prints in nineteenth-century Paris.[22] From their meeting in 1887 until his death in January of 1891, Theo was Gauguin's dealer and indefatigable supporter. He promoted Gauguin's career in numerous ways, even playing a role in the development of his art. Theo's influence upon Gauguin as a printmaker will be more fully addressed in Chapter One, but here I will address his role more generally in the development of the print market in Paris in the 1880s.

Theo van Gogh began his career as an art dealer working for the prestigious gallery Goupil et Cie in the Hague, the center of art trade in the Netherlands. Goupil's career began with the publication and sale of reproductions of works of art, a fact that influenced van Gogh's initial attitude toward prints.[23] By the 1880s, the company had been at the forefront of the market for art reproductions for half a century, moving forward as technology progressed, adopting photography and photogravure as they became available. The company successfully marketed prints, artist's albums, reproductions, illustrated magazines, catalogues and special series such as the *Galerie photographique* and the *Musée Goupil*. At Goupil et Cie, the sale of reproductions of works of art and of originals went hand-in-hand. The company offered its clients a wide range of prints and painted reproductions after works by old and modern masters in

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[22] For an appraisal of Theo van Gogh's contribution to the late-nineteenth century French market for prints, see Chris Stolwijk and Richard Thomson, *Theo van Gogh, 1857-1891: Art Dealer, Collector and Brother of Vincent* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum and Waanders, 1999.)

[23] For a discussion of Goupil's business, see Hélène Lafont-Couturier et al., *Gérome & Goupil: Art and Enterprise,* trans. Isabel Ollivier (Paris: Bordeaux: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000).

various price categories. In an indirect way, the consumption of reproductions encouraged the sale of original artworks. When a client bought a relatively inexpensive photogravure, he supported the artist whose work was reproduced. Such low-level collectors helped to promote an artist's reputation by spreading the word that a certain artist was popular and even reproductions of his work were in demand. It was the responsibility of the art dealer to encourage the client to refine his tastes and to acquire authentic works of art, perhaps beginning with original prints, then drawings, and ultimately paintings.

Theo eventually became responsible for the print department at Goupil et Cie. Encouraged by Vincent, he began collecting prints himself as early as 1873, buying prints after Dutch seventeenth-century masters, reproductions of work by contemporary Barbizon School artists such as Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) and Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878), as well as prints by artists of the Hague School such as Jozef Israëls (1824-1911) and Philip Sadée (1837-1904).[24] As a collector, he went on to establish a large collection, and, as a print dealer, he endeavored to promote and modernize the trade. Goupil et Cie published such prints in unprecedented quantities. Theo and Vincent were also enthusiastic about popular prints and illustrated books, also among Goupil's specialties.

In 1884 Goupil et Cie was bought out by Etienne Boussoud and René Valadon who continued the company's tradition of dealing in prints. Once photogravures reproducing Salon favorites went out of fashion, the company shifted direction to adapt to changing tastes. Theo oversaw the publication of various important albums of prints for

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[24] Stolwijk and Thomson, *Theo van Gogh, 1857-1891: Art Dealer, Collector and Brother of Vincent*, 155.

Boussoud, Valadon et Cie, beginning with George William Thornley's *Fifteen Lithographs after Degas* (*Quinze lithographies d'après Degas*), 1889 which reproduced paintings of dancers and bathers. The portfolio included prints executed in a variety of media printed on colored papers. Degas, himself an avid printmaker, was closely involved in the project.[25] August Lauzet's *Adolphe Monticelli: Twenty Plates After Original Paintings and Two Portraits by the Artist* (*Adolphe Monticelli: vingt planches d'après les tableaux originaux de Monticelli et deux portraits de l'artiste)* followed in 1890.

By the late 1880s, Theo van Gogh was known as a powerful dealer in modern art. As director of the Boussod et Valadon branch at 19, Boulevard Montmartre, he bought impressionist paintings in substantial numbers, chiefly by Degas and Monet. One aspect of his promotion of the careers of modern artists like Degas and Gauguin was to encourage them to make prints that would bolster their reputations and salability. It was thus that Theo utilized the training that he had received at Goupil's to further the careers of the avant-garde artists he so admired.

Theo continued building his personal art collection after his appointment as director of Boussod, Valadon & Cie. Although he was relatively well paid—by the end of the 1880s his monthly salary would have been between 900 and 1,000 francs, depending on the branch's annual results—in addition to supporting his wife and himself, he also had Vincent to subsidize, and following his father's death in 1885, he also contributed to

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[25] Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers, "Degas and the Printed Image, 1856-1914," Sue Walsh Reed and Barbara Shapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker* (Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1985), lvii-lviii.

the care of his mother and sisters.[26] Thus, because of his limited budget for art collecting, Theo continued to collect works on paper rather than acquiring paintings exclusively. Instead of reproductive prints, however, he was able to buy original prints and drawings by the two groups of French artists he held in greatest esteem: the Barbizon School and the Impressionists, as well as Japanese prints. Among the works on paper in his private collection—now in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam—were a drawing and a print by Manet, and etchings by Camille Corot (1796-1875), Charles-Emile Jacque (1813-1894), Jean-François Raffaëlli (1850-1924), and Jean-Louis Forain (1852-1931). Both as a dealer and collector, Theo van Gogh was a staunch supporter of prints, and so it is not surprising that it was he who helped lead Gauguin to play a central role in French printmaking at the end of the nineteenth century. In Chapter One I will discuss Theo van Gogh's influence on Gauguin's decision to begin making prints.

[26] Stolwijk and Thomson, *Theo van Gogh*, *1857-1891: Art Dealer, Collector and Brother of Vincent*, 156.

**Chapter One: Gauguin as Printmaker**

Up until the late 1880s, neither Gauguin nor any of the Pont-Aven artists had experimented with printmaking. Lithography required expensive blocks of limestone and access to a press, neither of which was available in Pont-Aven in the mid-1880s. Gauguin's life throughout this decade was peripatetic and financially fraught. In Pont-Aven he lived on credit and in Paris he survived through the charity of friends like Claude-Emile Schuffenecker (1851-1934). However, Gauguin continued to collect prints although he could no longer afford to collect paintings by Pissarro, Degas, and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). The acquisition of a group of Pissarro's etchings in 1885 was among Gauguin's final art purchases. Gauguin asked Pissarro to send his prints to Copenhagen after he had lost his job on the Bourse and was living with his wife's family in Denmark.[1] Gauguin lined the walls of his Paris studio with Japanese color woodcuts, known as ukiyo-e, and had his collection of Degas' prints sent to him in Arles, eventually bringing them to Tahiti.[2]

Gauguin's interest in printmaking became evident in 1888. In a letter now lost, Gauguin evidently suggested to Vincent van Gogh that once he, Emile Bernard (1868-1941) and Charles Laval (1862-1932) were settled in the Studio of the South in Arles, the four artists could work at night making lithographs that could be published periodically. In reply Vincent expressed his enthusiasm for printmaking, but was skeptical about the expense the publication would entail and the lack of public interest:

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[1] This point was made by Belinda Thomson in the exhibition in the exhibition *Gauguin's Vision* at the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, July 6-October 2, 2005.

[2] Françoise Cachin, "Degas and Gauguin," Ann Dumas et al., *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 232.

> …You write about business, and talk of lithographs. This is…what I think: For you, me, Bernard and Laval to make lithographs at night is all right… but I am not sure about their periodical publication so long as I am not better off…There is always something to spend money on in lithography even if you do not buy the stone…for publishing, however modestly, the four of us would be in for at least 50 francs each…I have already had some experience with one attempt,…besides…it would not last, and above all would never interest the public. Even if it did cost us money, I am actually all for making the lithographs in question. But as for publication…even free of cost—never. If it is at our expense and for our own pleasure and use, then I tell you again, I am for it. If you are thinking of something else, I am not for it.[3]

Van Gogh had already made a lithograph after his painting *The Potato Eaters* three years earlier without commercial success.[4]

The decisive element in Gauguin's decision to make a portfolio of prints was the encouragement of Theo van Gogh. The impact of Gauguin's relationship with the van Gogh brothers was of paramount importance to his development as an artist and has been the subject of numerous studies.[5] The entrance of Theo van Gogh into Gauguin's life must have seemed like an answered prayer. Gauguin met the van Gogh brothers in November of 1887, probably at Galerie Boussoud et Valadon or possibly at "Impressionists of the Petit Boulevard," a large exhibition organized by Vincent and installed at the Grand Bouillon in Montmartre, in November-December 1887. The

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[3] Vincent van Gogh to Gauguin, appended in the letter to Theo, 10 October 1888, letter 549, Vincent van Gogh, *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, trans. Johanna van Gogh-Bonger and C. de Dood (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958), 3: 72.

[4] Following his departure from Arles, Vincent sent Gauguin an impression of *The Potato Eaters*.

[5] For an excellent discussion of Theo van Gogh's role in the art market, see Chris Stolwijk et. al., *Theo van Gogh 1857-1891: Art Dealer, Collector and Brother of Vincent* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum and Waanders Publishers, 1999). Numerous scholars have examined the relationship between Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh and the art that the two artists produced during the nine weeks they shared in Arles. In particular, see Debora Silverman, *The Search for Sacred Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000) and Douglas Druick and Peter Kort Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South* (New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 2001).

exhibition was dominated by about one-hundred of Vincent's paintings; Bernard, Louis Anquetin (1861-1932), and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) also participated. Vincent intended the exhibition to be a kind of successor to the Impressionist exhibitions, but the artists included were more united by their marginal status rather than by stylistic similarity or shared program. In December of that year, Theo and Vincent visited Gauguin at Schuffenecker's home where they saw a selection of his work. Even in the short-term, the meeting proved fortuitous for Gauguin. Since the spring of 1886, Theo had been transforming Boussod et Valadon's Montmartre branch by supplementing its staples of Barbizon paintings and academic Salon favorites with paintings by the Impressionists. Committed to promoting the work of promising young artists, Theo agreed to take three of Gauguin's paintings on commission and to show them in the gallery alongside paintings by Pissarro and Armand Guillaumin (1841-1927). Within weeks, Theo paid Gauguin nine-hundred francs for the three paintings—the most Gauguin had ever earned from his art. Two paintings were offered for sale at the gallery, and Theo and Vincent kept *Among the Mangoes*, 1887, for their private collection.

In January or February of 1888, Gauguin left Paris for Pont-Aven where he re-established himself in the Gloanec Inn. Gauguin corresponded regularly with both Theo and Vincent van Gogh. From Arles, Vincent wrote of his dream of establishing a "Studio of the South" where he and a group of artists would live and work together. Vincent envisioned Gauguin as the leader of the group, and in May he asked Gauguin to join him in Arles. Gauguin did not seriously consider the invitation until the following month when Theo offered Gauguin monthly installments of 150 francs in exchange for one painting per month, if he were to go to Arles. Gauguin agreed to the arrangement, and

four months later, on October 21, 1888, Gauguin arrived in Arles. From the south of France, Gauguin maintained a frequent correspondence with Theo, leaving business decisions and even some aesthetic judgements up to him.

Gauguin's dependence on Theo van Gogh, his acceptance of Theo's advice, and the extent to which he was willing to go to Arles to placate the dealer in exchange for financial security is made clear in their correspondence. Immediately following Vincent's breakdown and self-mutilation, Gauguin contacted Theo, who rushed to Arles. Even after his relationship with Vincent had reached an embarrassing point of crisis, Gauguin was anxious to maintain a positive relationship with Theo, particularly as the forecast of upcoming sales of his work had not gone as well as expected. On November 13th, Theo wrote to inform Gauguin that he had sold two of the artist's paintings for a total of six-hundred francs, and that Degas was considering buying another. However, by January, Degas had decided against an acquisition, and the dealer had not sold any of Gauguin's paintings since the success of mid-November. Eager to secure Theo's continued support, Gauguin attempted to reassure Theo of his brother's sanity despite Vincent's breakdown. He still hoped the sale of his work through the dealer would be his financial salvation.

In an attempt to smooth over the abrupt termination of the household in Arles, Gauguin wrote to Vincent of his plans to make a suite of prints, mentioning in particular that he was motivated by Theo's encouragement:

> Now that I have a studio in which I sleep I'm going to get down to work. I've begun a series of lithographs that are to be published in order to establish my name. This is being done on the advice and under the auspices of your brother.[6]

[6] Gauguin to Vincent van Gogh, c. 20 January 1889, Paul Gauguin, *Gauguin by Himself,* ed. Belinda Thomson, trans. Belinda Thomson and Andrew Wilson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 101.

Thus, Gauguin executed the suite of eleven zincographs that became known as the *Volpini Suite*.

Characteristically, Gauguin's approach to printmaking deviated from tradition. Most artists prized the smooth surfaced textures achieved by making lithographs on Bavarian limestone. Instead, Gauguin chose to work on zinc plates, more commonly used in commercial printmaking and cheaper and more accessible than the limestones frequently used in artistic lithography. In addition, zinc plates have a slightly coarser grain, which Gauguin exploited in his prints. His decision to work on metal plates was akin to his choice to paint on jute rather than on primed canvas, resulting in comparably rough surface textures.[7] Furthermore, the metal plates were easily portable. Once shown how to draw on the plates, Gauguin could have worked on them back in the studio he had rented at 16, rue de Saint-Gothard, returning them to Ancourt's studio to be etched and printed.[8]

Of course, transfer paper also would have been easily transportable. In this process, the artist draws with a greasy medium on a sheet of paper that has been covered with a soluble surface layer. The transferring is done by placing the paper face downward on the stone and moistening it until the soluble layer dissolves and leaves the greasy

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[7] Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South*, 275.

[8] Etching the stone or plate refers to the chemical treatment required before printing. This process varies according to the surface of the matrix and also the technique of the drawing. Briefly, the surface of the stone must be washed with dilute nitric acid to fix the image on the stone, and rubbed with gum arabic ('desensitized') to prevent any further grease settling on the stone. Only then can the surface be washed and inked for printing. See Antony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 102; and Karen Beckwith, *Aluminum Plate Lithography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1999).

drawing adhering to the stone. Despite the ease of transport, transfer lithography has significant disadvantages. The stone—or plate—permitted much more varied styles of drawing than the paper, and the sharpness and definition of the drawing was often lost in the process of transferring. In addition, the tell-tale reproduction of the grain of the paper on which the image was drawn remained visible.[9] Gauguin may have used transfer paper to make a basic outline of his compositions—at times a faint double outline is visible around the contours of his figures—and then worked up the image directly on the zinc plate. The zinc plates offered a rough surface that appealed to the artist's sensibilities.

In many ways, zincography—the nineteenth century term for lithographs made from zinc plates—was ideally suited to a novice printmaker. Aloys Senefelder, the inventor of lithography, had foreseen metal plates as an alternative type of printing surface, and in the final appendix of his book, *The Art of Lithography*, he suggested zinc:

> All metals have great inclination for fats; but if they are quite clean, being ground with pumice, for instance, or rubbed-down with chalk, they can be prepared like a stone, that is, they acquire the property of resisting oil color, thus becoming available for chemical printing. Iron and zinc can be prepared like the stone with aquafortis and gum.[10]

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[9] Griffith's discussion of lithography, printers, and the use of transfer paper in the context of Toulouse-Lautrec's prints has been useful to this discussion. Antony Griffiths, "The Prints of Toulouse-Lautrec," Wolfgang Wittrock, *Toulouse-Lautrec: The Complete Prints*, trans. Catherine E. Kuehn (London: Sotheby's Publications, 1985), 35-48.

[10] Aloys Senefelder, *L'Art de la lithographie* (Munich: Chez l'auteur, 1819), 225. "Tous les métaux ont une grande inclination à recevoir les corps gras; cependant on peut, quand ils sont tout-à-fait nets (c'est-à-dire polis avec la pierre-ponce ou frottés de craie), les préparer comme la pierre, et leur donner, au moyen de divers procédés, une qualité qui les empêche de recevoir la couleur à l'huile, et par conséquent les rend propres à l'impression chimique. Le fer et le zinc peuvent être preparés comme la pierre, au moyen de l'eau-forte et le la gomme."

Throughout the nineteenth century, a small number of planographic prints were produced from zinc plates; the difference between a finished print made from limestone and one from a zinc plate is not remarkable. In zincography, a professional prepared the surface of the plate, creating a crisp even tooth similar to, although coarser than that of grained limestone. The plate could then be drawn on like a stone, however the deep scratching and scraping that were possible on limestone were not possible on metal plates.

In making the *Volpini Suite*, Gauguin exploited every possibility of the medium. In the eleven images, he drew his sharpest, most defined lines with a pen and lithographer's ink, used lithographic chalk or crayon for softer lines and for some of the shading, and used liquid tusche, or wash ink, applied with brushes to create areas of tone, pattern and texture. In some passages he scratched through the tusche to expose tiny white lines to create additional texture and modeling. As Richard Field points out, Gauguin's technique included the use of a wash the French call "peau du crapaud" (toadskin) that is particular to zincography.[11]

Although the range of textures and subtle shades of gray achieved in the *Volpini Suite* appear to be those of an experienced printmaker, the suite was made during a period of about six weeks by an artist who had never before worked in the medium. Gauguin arrived in Paris on December 26, 1888, and stayed until mid-February 1889 when he departed for Pont-Aven. Having decided to take stock of his career and summarize it graphically, Gauguin mastered the technique of zincography almost immediately.

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[11] Richard S. Field, "Gauguin," *Print Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1989): 200.

Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) played an important role in Gauguin's early development.[12] He was Gauguin's first mentor, and although in many ways his influence was superseded by that of Degas, I would argue that his effect outlasted the Impressionist phase of Gauguin's painting. In the exhibition *Gauguin's Vision*, Belinda Thomson made the connection between Pissarro's prints and Gauguin's fan shaped works on paper, pointing out that in Copenhagen Gauguin studied the Impressionist's etchings, sometimes transposing them into his own fan-shaped compositions.[13] Gauguin was impressed by Pissarro's technical assurance as a printmaker, particularly his use of aquatint to achieve an extraordinary range of black and grey tones. In the *Volpini Suite*, Gauguin recreated the complexity of Pissarro's textures. Passages such as the foreground tree at the right and the background hills in *Pastorales Martinique* as well as the waves in *Dramas of the Sea* evoke an impressive array of surface and pattern achieved with lithographic inks or tusche. These variations in tone and texture are all that serve to differentiate forms such as the two women in the foreground of *Breton Women at the Fence*. Within a limited vocabulary of black (or upon one occasion red-brown) ink on yellow paper, Gauguin found a way to suggest landscapes that ranged from the tropics of the Caribbean, to the rural fields of Brittany, to the high seas of the Atlantic.

In many of the compositions in the *Volpini Suite*, Gauguin rendered forms that seem deliberately ambiguous. Is the heavy black diagonal that cuts across the

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[12] The issue of Pissarro's influence on Gauguin has most recently been explored in Richard Brettell and Anne Birgitte Fonsmark, *Gauguin and Impressionism* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005).

[13] In the exhibition *Gauguin's Vision*, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, July 6—October 2, 2005, examples of Pissarro's etchings were displayed in the same gallery as Gauguin and Degas' fans.

composition of *Breton Bathers* water or rocks? Is the swirling mass of lines in *Dramas of the Sea: Brittany* a waterfall, or the jagged face of a cliff? As Peter Zegers and Douglas Druick aptly point out, the graphic techniques that Gauguin used seem to imbue a sense of loss—the forms seem to melt away before our very eyes.[14] This is abundantly clear in impressions of *Noa Noa* printed by off-register by Gauguin but it is also evident in earlier prints in the *Volpini Suite* in which forms seem to dissolve upon close inspection.

**Exhibiting the Prints: The Café Vopini Show**

Once having made the suite, the question remained of how and where to first display it and offer it for sale. A solution presented itself in the spring of 1889 when the Centennial Exposition commemorating the French Revolution was held in Paris as part of the 1889 Exposition Universelle. The star attraction of the exposition was the newly inaugurated Eiffel Tower, a symbol of modernity and technological masterpiece of open-lattice wrought iron standing 300 hundred meters tall. An estimated 33 million visitors attended the Exposition Universelle. On display were the products of agriculture and industrial objects, as well as elaborate installations descriptive of the French colonies, complete with performances and installations.

At the foot of the Eiffel Tower a palais de beaux-arts was erected to house a retrospective of French art from 1789-1889. Another exhibition, the Décennale, was devoted to international art of the last decade. A vast array of over six hundred paintings as well as sculpture, prints and drawings was on display. Works by conservative,

[14] Peter Zegers and Douglas Druick, *Paul Gauguin: Pages from the Pacific* (Chicago and Auckland: Art Institute of Chicago and Auckland City Art Gallery, 1995), 8.

academic artists such as Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891), William Bouguereau (1825-1905) and Alexandre Cabanal (1823-1889) were on view, as well as by the quintessential Romantic, Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), Barbizon school artists Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878) and Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867), and the classicist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). The critic Roger Marx managed to have paintings by many still controversial artists included such as Manet's *Olympia* and *Le bon Bock*, Monet's *Les Tuileries*, and Pissarro's *Soleil d'hiver.* Although invited to participate, Degas declined to exhibit his paintings in the room provided for him. One work by Cézanne was exhibited, *La maison du pendu*. Despite the inclusion of several Impressionists, most of the younger generation of artists including Gauguin, were not included in the exhibition.

Always adept in seizing the opportunity for self-promotion, Gauguin sought to follow in the footsteps of Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) and Manet, who in 1855 and 1867 respectively, had built their own pavilions on the exposition grounds. Gauguin lacked the funds for such an undertaking, but nevertheless wanted to be represented on the Exposition grounds, which he visited several times while he was in Paris, from the show's opening on May 6 until his departure for Brittany around the end of May.[15] Gauguin enlisted his friend and fellow artist Schuffenecker to organize an exhibition of

[15] There have been numerous disputes as to Gauguin's whereabouts in the winter and spring of 1889. Previously, it has been thought that Gauguin travelled to Brittany during March or April of 1889, returned to Paris briefly, and then in June returned to Brittany. Bogomilia Welsh-Ovcharov has convincingly argued that in fact Gauguin spent five uninterrupted months in Paris from January through May 1889, and that he returned to Brittany before the opening of the Volpini exhibition. See Bogomilia Welsh-Ovcharov, "Paul Gauguin's Third Visit to Brittany—June 1889-November 1890," in Eric Zafran ed., *Gauguin's Nirvana: Painters at Le Pouldu 1889-90* (New Haven; Hartford: Yale University Press; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2001), 22-24. This author agrees with Welsh-Ovcharov's argument.

Gauguin's paintings along with works by his Pont-Aven friends, and to find an exhibition site. Schuffenecker found an ideal location when he discovered a café owner distraught over a missing shipment of large mirrors. Monsieur Volpini was persuaded to cover the walls of his Café des arts with avant-garde paintings instead. The café was located on the grounds of the Exposition Universelle, at the foot of the Italian galleries of the Décennale, in front of the Pavilion de la Presse where journalists continuously passed by.

Upon hearing of the arrangements, Gauguin, back in Pont-Aven, wrote to Schuffenecker:

> Bravo! You have brought it off. See [Theo] van Gogh, and arrange everything. Only remember that it is not an exhibition for the others. As a result, let us arrange it for a little group of comrades, and from this point of view I should want to be represented there as fully as possible…For my part, I decline to exhibit with the others, Pissarro, Seurat, etc. It is our group! I wanted to exhibit very little, but Laval told me it was my turn, and that I should do wrong in working for others.[16]

The exhibition was an opportunity for the Pont-Aven group to distinguish itself from the Neo-Impressionists and for Gauguin to proclaim himself the leader of a new school of painting. In his letter to Schuffenecker, Gauguin included two lists, one of paintings he wished to exhibit, and the other of artists Schuffenecker was to invite to exhibit with them and the number of canvases they were allowed:

Schuffenecker 10 canvases
Guillaumin 10 canvases

[16] Gauguin to Schuffenecker, March 1889, Victor Merlhès, ed., *De Bretagne en Polynésie, Paul Gauguin, pages inédites* (Tahiti: Avant et Après, 1995), 26. "Mon cher Schuffenecker, Bravo! Vous avez réussi. Voyez van Gogh et arrangez celà jusqu'à la fin. Seulement rappelez-vous bien que ce n'est pas une exposition pour les autres. En conséquence arrangez-nous pour un petit groupe de copains et à ce point de vue je désire y être représenté le plus possible…Moi je refuse d'exposer avec les autres, Pissarro, Seurat, etc…C'est notre groupe! Je voulais exposer peu mais Laval me dit que c'est mon tour et que j'aurais tort de travailler pour les autres."

| | |
|---|---|
| Gauguin | 10 canvases |
| Bernard | 10 canvases |
| | 40 canvases |
| Roy | 2 canvases |
| Man of Nancy | 2 canvases |
| Vincent | 6 canvases |
| | TOTAL 50[17] |

The letter and list reveal Gauguin's desire to control the way that he and his friends would be publicly represented and also show that the presentation of his own work and the promotion of his own reputation were of primary concern.

The exhibition opened on June 8, 1889. Posters on a background of horizontal red and white stripes in bold black type advertised an exhibition by the "Groupe Impressioniste et Synthétiste" at the Café des arts on the Champ-de-Mars and included the names of the exhibitors: Paul Gauguin, Charles Laval, Léon Fauché, E. Schuffenecker, Louis Anquetin, Georges Daniel, Emile Bernard, Louis Roy, and Ludovic Nemo. Among those on Gauguin's original list of participants, Guillaumin, perhaps offended by Gauguin's refusal to exhibit with his Impressionist friends, declined to participate in the show. Theo van Gogh ruled out Vincent's participation, explaining to his brother that the exhibition seemed to him an attempt to get into the Exposition Universelle "through the back stairs."[18] What may have troubled Theo even more was

[17]Ibid., 26.

[18] Theo van Gogh to Vincent van Gogh, Paris, June 16, 1889, letter T 10, in Van Gogh, *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, 3:544. "As you know, there is an exhibition at a café at the Exposition where Gauguin and some others (Schuffenecker) are exhibiting pictures. At first I had said that you would exhibit some things too, but they assumed an air of being such tremendous fellows that it made one sick. Yet Schuffenecker claims that his manifestation will eclipse all the other painters, and if they had let him have his way, he would have paraded all over

that Gauguin and his friends propagated an arrogant, exclusionary politics that was reminiscent of the factionalism that had plagued the Impressionists until their last exhibition together in 1886.[19] The "man of Nancy" mentioned by Gauguin was Léon Fauché. He and Louis Roy were two young artists whom Gauguin had met in Brittany. Gauguin also decided to add two other young artists, Charles Laval, an artist whom he had met in Pont-Aven and who accompanied him to Martinique, and Daniel de Monfreid, a friend of Schuffenecker's. Ludovic Nemo was an alias for Emile Bernard. Ultimately, Gauguin exhibited twelve works, which, like the *Volpini Suite*, summarized his work in Brittany, Martinique, and Arles. Schuffenecker exhibited twenty, Bernard twenty-five (two under the name Nemo), Laval ten, Anquetin seven, Roy seven, Fauché five, and Daniel three.

Gauguin's suite of zincographs, along with a set of eight hand-colored zincographs by Bernard titled *Les Bretonneries*, were listed in the catalogue as "visible sur demande" (available upon request) (figure 1.1). The notation makes clear that the prints were not framed and mounted on the walls, but that the sheets were available within portfolios for visitors to leaf through and examine themselves, thus encouraging the viewer's personal contact with the works of art. Emile Bernard's prints, *Les Bretonneries*, will be the subject of Chapter Four.

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Paris adorned with flags of all manner of colors to show he was the great conqueror. It gave one somewhat the impression of going to the Universal Exhibition by the back stairs."

[19] Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South*, 284. For example, Druick and Zegers mention that Toulouse-Lautrec was not permitted to exhibit with the group, because he had exhibited at the Cercle artistique et lettéraire Volney, a venue that Gauguin may have objected to.

Financially the exhibition was not a success; not a single work sold. Gauguin's disappointment is registered in his subsequent letters from Brittany. The importance of the exhibition would not be manifest until much later. Artists of the following generation who later became known as the Nabis were much affected by the exhibition, as were others who were to become important modernists.

There are no records that Gauguin's and Bernard's portfolios of prints sold at the exhibition; however, in his *Carnet* of 1889, Gauguin listed purchasers of the album as "Jean de" [Rotonchamp?] who paid 40 francs, "Chamaillard" (a Pont-Aven artist) who paid 40 francs, "Portier," (an art dealer) who paid 25 francs, and Theo "van Gog[h]" who paid 30 francs. Gauguin also listed giving the album to Schuffenecker, Charles Filiger and Auguste "Delaherche."[20] In 2004, the Van Gogh Museum purchased a complete set of the *Volpini Suite* plus a hand-colored impression of *Dramas of the Sea*, an indication that the Suite that Theo ostensibly purchased in 1889 did not wind up in his personal collection; he may have sold it or given it away. An inscription on a hand-colored impression of *Joys of Brittany* from the *Volpini Suite*, "Lithographie colorée par Gauguin achetée à la vent de Gauguin Hôtel Drouot par moi, A. Seguin" (Lithograph colored by Gauguin, purchased by me at Gauguin's sale at the Hôtel Drouot) reveals that it was purchased by Armand Seguin in the auction of Gauguin's work in February 1891. There may have been later sales and gifts of the album to others after 1889, but even this short list indicates the availability of the zincographs to other artists. The effect of the *Volpini Suite* on subsequent generations of artists will be the subject of Chapter Five.

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[20] René Huyghe, *Le Carnet de Paul Gauguin* (Paris: Quatre Shemins-Edditart, 1952), 223.

Gauguin's first significant public attempt in self-promotion had apparently failed. The reviews had been lukewarm, sales abysmal, and Gauguin was further from financial stability than he had been in Arles when Theo van Gogh paid his bills.[21] The importance of the Volpini exhibition to the next generation of artists would not be realized for some years. The most immediate result of the exhibition, however, was that it articulated Gauguin's ambitious aspirations. In staging the exhibition at Volpini's café on the grounds of the Universal Exposition, Gauguin wanted "to be represented…as fully as possible." He had stressed to Schuffenecker that it was an exhibition for *his* group—not for the others—and that his friend should do his best in Gauguin's interests, securing good positions for his pictures. Gauguin's will to be known was the driving force behind this enterprise.

The creation of the *Volpini Suite* reflects the same motivation that Gauguin had in organizing the exhibition at Volpini's café. His desire to proclaim himself to as wide an audience as possible as the leader of a new school of artists was the impetus for the group exhibition. Just as he chose to represent himself on the grounds of the Universal Exposition with twelve paintings installed in Volpini's café, including works from Martinique, Pont-Aven, Le Pouldu, and Arles, the suite was a visual resumé of his professional career, referring to the places that were important to him and addressing his major themes. The suite was an advertisement for his paintings, for his style, for Gauguin himself.

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[21] Reviews of the exhibition included the following articles: Albert Aurier, "Concurrence," *Le Moderniste*, no. 10 (June 27, 1889); Gustave Kahn, "L'Art Français à l'Exposition," *La Vogue* no. 2 (Aug. 1889); Félix Fénéon, "Autre groupe impressionniste," *La Cravache* (July 6, 1889).

**The Volpini Exhibition as a Reaction to the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition**

I would argue that the organization of the Volpini exhibition was fueled by the humiliation that Gauguin experienced after the eighth Impressionist exhibition of 1886. By that date, Gauguin was closely involved with the Impressionists. Enthusiastic about the exhibition, he had played an active role in organizing the opening dinner. He was certainly aware that the exhibition would include works by a group of younger artists led by Georges Seurat who had come together in the recently formed Salon des Indépendants. Initially, Gauguin was not out of sympathy with the young artists' principles. Their research into color division had parallels with his own belief that superior effects could be achieved through the juxtaposition of pure tones rather than mixing colors on a palette.

What changed Gauguin's attitude toward the "Neos?" Gauguin's dislike for Seurat appears to date from the autumn of 1886 when he returned to Paris from Brittany. During this time, Paul Signac offered Gauguin use of the studio that he shared with Seurat. Unaware of this agreement, Seurat apparently prevented Gauguin from working there, and a quarrel ensued. Gauguin wrote bitterly to Signac:

> I am a person of no manners or delicacy; you are really a good fellow to accept my bad behavior! That is what Monsieur Seurat said to Pissarro and Guillaumin…I may be an artist full of hesitancy and with little knowledge, but as a man of the world I will allow no one the right to annoy me.[22]

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[22] Gauguin to Paul Signac, Paris, July 1886 (letter 103), Paul Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin: documents, témoignages, Vol. 1, 1873-1888*, ed. Victor Merlhès (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), 131. "Je suis un homme mal élévé et indélicat; vous êtes vraiment bon garçon d'accepter un pareil sans-gêne de ma part. Voilà ce que Monsieur Seurat a dit à Pissarro et à Guillaumin…Je puis être un artiste plein d'hésitations et peu savant, mais comme homme du monde je ne laisserai à personne le droit de me molester."

From that point onward, Gauguin was outwardly scornful of Seurat and Pointillism as well as of Pissarro's paintings executed in a Neo-Impressionist style. Gauguin avoided his old friend, instead favoring Degas. According to Pissarro's correspondence, one evening at the Café de la Nouvelle-Athènes where the Impressionists regularly gathered, Pissarro's arrival in the company of Seurat, Signac, and Dubois-Pillet prompted Gauguin to make a scene. Pissarro explained:

> Lately, I've been going with Seurat, Signac and Dubois-Pillet to La Nouvelle-Athènes; upon entering one evening, we saw Guillaumin, Gauguin, Zandomeneghi. Guillaumin refused to shake hands with Signac, as did Gauguin; there was some explanation, but it was impossible to understand; it appears that the cause was that affair in Signac's studio, a misunderstanding. Nevertheless Gauguin left abruptly without saying goodbye to me or Signac, or the others.[23]

It is more likely that it was the surge of interest surrounding Seurat after this show that inspired hostility in Gauguin rather than these superficial exchanges. In the apartment rented in the Maison Dorée in the rue Laffitte for the exhibition, the final room showcased paintings done in the Neo-Impressionist style by Seurat, Signac and Pissarro himself. Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grand Jatte* dominated the room, and Seurat was recognized as the leader of the group. It is ironic that Seurat—who by all accounts had a remote and exacting personality—at twenty-six years of age had been identified in the press as a radical who upended all that the Impressionists stood for: spontaneity, the transient effects of light and atmosphere, and improvisation. *La Grande Jatte* was above all else calculated, solid, based on science rather than emotion. The

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[23] Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 3 December 1886, Janine Bailly-Herzberg, *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro, 1866-1890*, vols. 1-5 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1986) 2 : 80. "Je me suis trouvé avec Signac, Seurat et Dubois-Pillet à la Nouvelle Athènes dernièrement; en rentrant, Guillaumin, Gauguin et Zando(meneghi) s'y trouvaient: Guillaumin a refusé de donner la main à Signac ainsi que Gauguin. Il y a eu explication: impossible d'y rien comprendre, il paraît que c'est pour l'affaire de l'atelier de Signac, un malentendu. Malgré cela, Gauguin est sorti brusquement sans saluer ni moi, ni Signac, etc."

painting was exhibited for the second time in late summer of 1886 with the Société des Artistes Indépendants. It was in the autumn that the critic Felix Fénéon coined the term "Neo-Impressionnisme."[24] By the following year when the painting was shown in Brussels, Neo-Impressionism was recognized as the vanguard in painting.

As Robert Herbert has pointed out, the appearance and growing fame of the *Grande Jatte* coincided with the ascent of Symbolism; numerous poets of the literary movement were drawn to Neo-Impressionism and to Seurat in particular.[25] He was their favorite artist until his early death in 1891 when he was replaced by Gauguin. Paul Adam and Félix Fénéon lavished praise on *La Grande Jatte*, publishing the most substantial reviews of his work subsequent to the eighth Impressionist exhibition. According to the two critics, *La Grande Jatte* demonstrated the intellectual prowess of the artist and manifested the latest findings of modern science. Seurat avoided the passive indulgence of the Impressionists, who, for them, were mere copyists, and he succeeded in achieving a synthesis and abstraction of nature. Adam stressed the triumph of ideas over naturalism, declaring that "the most advanced impressionists" used scientific color division, and looked back to the art of previous centuries. The critic argued that "the varied and melodious forms of the primitives suits the new generation," and suggested analogies between sixteenth-century frescoes and the work of certain Impressionists—namely Seurat.[26]

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[24] Félix Fénéon, "L'Impressionnisme aux Tuileries," *L'Art moderne* 6, 38, (September 19, 1886), 300-302.

[25] Robert Herbert, *Seurat and the Making of La Grande Jatte* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2004), 125.

[26] See Paul Adam, "Peintres impressionnistes," *Revue contemporaine: Littéraire, politique et philosophique* vol. 4 (April 1886): 541-551. Reprinted in Ruth Berson ed., *The New Painting:*

In contrast to the praise that greeted Seurat's work, the critics' reactions to Gauguin's paintings exhibited in the eighth Impressionist exhibition were lukewarm at best, and compounded the artist's frustrations. Various reviewers made clear that they still considered Gauguin a student of Impressionism, and scarcely acknowledged the diversity of his display, which included views of Rouen, Dieppe, and Copenhagen. Critics called attention to the technical aspects of his work that underscored his apprenticeship with Pissarro, particularly his flicked brushstrokes and his tendency to create an overall tonal effect. Most annoying would have been the Belgian critic Octave Maus' assessment that Gauguin was a newcomer to Impressionism whose work depended too closely on Guillaumin.[27] Geoffroy found Gauguin's work to be overly unified; Fénéon implied that his paintings were monotonous.[28] As a result, Gauguin's relationship with the Neo-Impressionists began to disintegrate from the moment of the eighth Impressionist exhibition, and he increasingly criticized their methods and the extreme modernity of their subject matter. He refused to exhibit either in the Salon des Indépendants or at *La Revue indépendante* because they were associated with Neo-Impressionism. With this refusal, Gauguin made an important decision, setting himself decisively on a separate and opposed path and establishing Seurat as a rival. Although in 1886, most of the Symbolist literati supported Seurat, their loyalty was by no means

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*Impressionism, 1874-1886, Documentation* Vols. 1-2 (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), 1: 430.

[27] O. Maus, "Les Vingtistes parisiens," *L'Art moderne de Bruxelles* ( 27 June 1886): 201-4 ; reprinted in Berson, ed., *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874-1886: Documentation*, 1: 462-4.

[28] Charles S. Moffett, et. al., *The New Painting: Impressionism 1784-1886* (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986), 429.

unanimous. Huysmans' criticism of pointillism was memorable, "Peel his figures of the colored fleas they are covered in, underneath is empty; no soul, no thought, nothing."[29]

As Belinda Thomson astutely acknowledges, Gauguin was interested in pursuing neither an art of modernity nor of surfaces.[30] His goal in 1887 was to navigate a different, highly personal art capable of revealing the soul of the artist and affecting the emotions of the viewer. By setting himself on a course opposite to that of Seurat, I would argue that Gauguin realized that he not only had to invent another, modern way of making art, but that he also had to act as the leader of a new school of painting.[31] By 1888 he referred to waging war on the "little dot," finding support among his colleagues in Pont-Aven and Bernard in particular. In a drawing in a sketchbook that he kept in Brittany, Gauguin depicted himself and his friends in a caricature *A Nightmare—Portraits of Emile Schuffenecker, Emile Bernard, and Paul Gauguin,* c. 1889 (figure 1.2). The artists stand in front of a sign "SYNTHETISME," perhaps alluding to their participation in the Volpini exhibition.

**Self-Promotion, Myth-Making, and the *Volpini Suite***

Gauguin's correspondence, autobiographical and critical writings, and numerous self-portraits reveal the artist as a master of self-invention. Early letters to his wife, Mette affirm Gauguin's resolve to initiate a self-conscious, carefully designed persona. Once he

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[29] J. K. Huysmans, "Les Indépendants," *Revue indépendante*, no. 6 (April 1887): 51-57.

[30] Belinda Thomson, *Gauguin's Vision* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2005), 23.

[31] Brettell has discussed Gauguin's humiliation at the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition and his subsequent desire to reinvent himself as an artist, see Brettell and Fonsmark, *Gauguin and Impressionism*, 278-283.

became a full-time artist, a self-conscious construction of identity became Gauguin's life project alongside painting, sculpture, ceramics and prints. His art as well as his published writing and letters were part of a program of strategic myth-making. His creation of the *Volpini Suite* played an important role in his invention of a complex persona.

Ironically, Gauguin's early life seemed to establish a situation that would make him difficult to define. Dislocation cast a shadow over his childhood and early adulthood. Gauguin's early childhood was spent in Lima, Peru, living in the house of his great uncle.[32] Afterwards, Gauguin, his mother and sister returned to Paris where he was enrolled in a Catholic seminary. At the age of seventeen he enlisted as an officer's candidate in the merchant marines and departed on a fifteen-week sail to Rio de Janeiro. For the next five years, until 1870, Gauguin traveled around the world in the service of the merchant marines and later in the French navy. Whereas this peripatetic upbringing and early life may have led to the sense of alienation that defined Gauguin's world view, a love of spectacle and the exotic was also spawned during his early years. His love of the exotic was further fostered by a mythologized family history.

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[32] Gauguin was one-eighth Peruvian; his maternal great-grandfather Don Mariano de Tristan Moscoso was the son of an old Spanish family established in Arequipa, south of Lima, since the seventeenth century. Like many upper-class Spanish Peruvian children, Don Mariano was educated in Paris. He later pursued a military career and in the 1790s was sent to Spain to oversee Peruvian troops. In Spain he met and married a French woman, Anne-Pierre Laisnay. Their union was considered invalid by both the French government and the Tristan Moscoso family in Peru however, because the couple had not filed the proper civil marriage forms. Don Mariano died in 1807, leaving a young widow and two children who were cut off from his considerable fortune in France and South America. Laisnay spent the remainder of her life in court trying to overturn this decision. As an adult, her daughter, Flora Célestine (Gauguin's grandmother) journeyed to Peru and was more successful in gaining at least a fraction of her inheritance. She ultimately became famous as a writer, publishing under the name Flora Tristan, Her first book, *Peregrainations of a Pariah*, 1838 documented her journey to Peru in 1833-34; she later published other observations about life in England and France. She became one of France's most famous social reformers, advocating for the poor and working-classes. She raised her daughter, Aline (Gauguin's mother) in Paris amongst a milieu of South American ex-patriots, spending time in Paris as students, decadents, merchants, or investors, and in time, Aline raised Paul and Marie similarly.

One aspect of his personality that he chose to emphasize early on was that of the primitive savage from Peru. Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers have suggested that his desire to be perceived as "primitive" stemmed from his wish to enter an atavistic state of mind that would run counter to the scientific rationality of Neo-Impressionism.[33] While this desire to differentiate himself from the Neo-Impressionists may have been one of the reasons that Gauguin sought out "exotic" locales and described himself as a crude sailor, I suggest that this identification with primitivism was a more intrinsic part of his personality, stemming from the experiences of his youth. In Brittany in 1888, he warned Mette of his dual nature, "You have to remember that I have two natures—the savage and the oversensitive. The oversensitive one has disappeared, which enables the savage to advance resolutely and unimpeded."[34] This letter is one of the early indications of Gauguin's invented persona—that of the Peruvian "savage," unaccountable to the strictures of society. Gauguin's most oft-quoted statement about the north coast of France: "I like Brittany, I find it savage and primitive. When my clogs echo on this granite soil, I hear the dull, muted, powerful tone I look for in painting," underscores his desire to associate himself and his art with what he perceived as the primitive.[35]

By 1888, Gauguin's efforts were increasingly concentrated on establishing a mythologized self, and describing himself as a savage. Gauguin's self-created myth

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[33] Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh Gauguin: The Studio of the South*, 96

[34] Gauguin to Mette Gauguin, Paris, February 1888, Paul Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends*, ed. Maurice Malingue (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 94.

[35] Gauguin to Schuffnecker, late Feb early March 1888, letter 141, Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin*, ed. Merlhès, 172. "J'aime la Bretagne, j'y trouve le sauvage, le primitive. Quand mes sabots résonnent sur ce sol de granit, j'étends le ton sourd, mat et puissant que je cherche en peinture."

eventually took on monumental proportions and should be understood as one of the artist's most original creations, existing alongside his extraordinary output of paintings, drawings, sculpture, ceramics and prints.[36] Indeed, this interest in manufacturing his own image and in living out a self-created mythology underlies many of Gauguin's creative impulses. The *Volpini Suite* was a key aspect of Gauguin's early self-promotion, and self-invention. This suite, a series of eleven images by which he chose to be known, was a proclamation of the themes and experience, of the boldness and even ugliness with which he wished to be associated.

In January 1889, just around the time that he was making the *Volpini Suite*, Gauguin wrote to Mette, "According to you, Schuffenecker undoubtedly flatters me far too much, and yet he is only more or less repeating what many others are saying, even Degas. I'm a pirate, he says, but damn it…the very incarnation of art."[37] This succinctly articulates Gauguin's aim in the *Volpini Suite*: as an outsider to challenge order and balance, to break rules—to be a "pirate"—but also to live and breathe art, to personify it, and in essence, to be his own greatest work of art. I suggest that the portfolio of prints is one facet of Gauguin's self-invention that began in full force during this period.

Gauguin's continued identification with the 'primitive' led him back to Brittany for another extended period in 1889. But from this point onward, artifacts from Brittany's past were not the only vocabulary through which Gauguin represented the 'primitive' in his art. Working in Le Pouldu, Gauguin invented the motif of the Breton Eve based on

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[36] Britt Salvesen in association with Douglas Druick and Peter Kort Zegers, *Gauguin* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 9.

[37] Gauguin to Mette Gauguin, Paris, January 1889, Gauguin, *Gauguin by Himself*, ed. Thomson, 100.

the anguished form of a Peruvian mummy that he had seen in Paris in the Trocadéro's Ethnographic Museum.[38] The faces in his paintings and drawings of this period have distinctly Asian physiognomies, while their poses evoke Cambodian sculpture. Gauguin explained the origins of his "religious primitive style" to Theo van Gogh: "You know that I have Indian Blood, Inca blood in me, and it's reflected in everything I do. It's the basis of my personality; I try to confront rotten civilization with something more natural, based on savagery."[39] It was during this period that Gauguin grew his hair long in emulation of Buffalo Bill Cody whose "Wild West Show" he had seen and appreciated at the Colonial Exposition.[40] In 1893 Gauguin returned to Paris following his first sojourn in the South Seas. He rented a studio, which he decorated with unsold Tahitian paintings and drawings as well as other exotic artifacts, including boldly patterned textiles. By this time he had become expert in playing the role of the exotic bohemian. His companion of this period was a thirteen-year-old girl—a substitute for his Tahitian vahine, Tehamana, the model for *Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching)*, 1892. His new model was a native of Ceylon, nicknamed Annah la Javanaise, accompanied by her pet monkey. In the studio he hosted gatherings of artists, writers and musicians, and at times recited from his draft of

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[38] Wayne V. Andersen, "Gauguin and a Peruvian Mummy," *The Burlington Magazine* (April 1967): 238-242.

[39] Gauguin to Theo van Gogh, Le Pouldu, 20 or 21 November 1889, Gauguin, *Gauguin by Himself*, ed. Thomson, 111.

[40] Peter Zegers and Douglas Druick "Le Kampong et la Pagoda: Gauguin à l'exposition universelle de 1889," in Musée d'Orsay and Ecole du Louvre, *Gauguin*: *Actes du colloque Gauguin* (Paris: Documentation française, 1991), 101-142.

*Noa Noa*.[41] In this period may be seen the culmination of the exotic image that he had begun creating of himself as early as 1888.

In a telling passage in *Avant et Après*, Gauguin acknowledged the schism between his public and private selves, and the selective process that went on in his elaboration of a public persona:

> A critic at my house sees some paintings. Greatly perturbed, he asks for my drawings. My drawings! Never! They are my letters, my secrets. The public man—the private man. You wish to know who I am; my [public] works are not enough for you. Even at this moment, as I write, I am revealing only what I want to reveal. What if you often see me quite naked; that is no argument. It is the inner man you want to see…Besides, I do not always see myself very well.[42]

According to the artist, his paintings were intended for public consumption, while the drawings and sketchbooks were where he revealed his private self. Paintings, however, were not the only public domain of Gauguin's public persona. Thanks to the initial encouragement of Theo van Gogh, he also used prints as tools through which to make public statements. The *Volpini Suite*—and later *Noa Noa*—were very much public works of art, intended to reveal precisely the image of himself he wished to portray. The drawings and prints are the places in which one can find motifs that appear repeatedly throughout Gauguin's oeuvre—across media, locale, and time. He often repeated in the prints particular poses, gestures, or ways of rendering water or perspective that first appeared in paintings.

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[41] Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers, *Pages from the Pacific* (Chicago and Auckland: Art Institute of Chicago and Auckland City Art Gallery, 1995). See figures 48-51 in which the authors cleverly emulate the appearance of Gauguin and companions seated in front of Tahitian paintings in his Paris studio based on a photograph of 1894.

[42] Paul Gauguin, *Gauguin's Intimate Journals*, trans.Van Wyck Brooks (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1958), 115.

Gauguin's constant need to invent and reinvent himself and his art was recognized by his contemporaries. During the summer of 1889, Paul Sérusier (1864-1927), a young artist who was living with Gauguin and Jacob Meyer de Haan (1852-1895) in Le Pouldu, became doubtful of Gauguin, detecting in his work a lack of delicacy, an "illogical affectation in the drawing…a search for originality bordering on the fraudulent."[43] The boundary between the artist and his art was becoming blurred, Gauguin's life-as-art appearing forced, even to his followers. Although Sérusier's opinion would shift and he would become more supportive of Gauguin, he raised an important point. Gauguin was aggressively pushing himself in the years between 1888 and 1890. In letters from Le Pouldu to Bernard, he described schemes of going to Martinique and Madagascar, and compared himself alternately to Buffalo Bill and Christ.[44] The *Volpini Suite* can be read as an early example of Gauguin's creation of his own mythology.

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[43] Sérusier to Denis, Pont-Aven, "Jour de Vénus" 27 Sept. 1889, Paul Sérusier, *ABC de la peinture* (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1950), 39. "Je me suis aperçu, dès mon arrivée, que Gauguin, qui est avec moi, n'est pas l'artiste de mon rêve ; j'ai vu dans son raisonnement des points où nous ne sommes pas d'accord, et, dans ses œuvres, un manque de délicatesse, une affectation illogique du dessin, puérile, une recherche d'originalité allant jusqu'à la fumisterie."

[44] Gauguin to Bernard, Le Pouldu, August 1890, Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends*, ed. Malingue, 149. "I myself walk about like a savage, with long hair…I have cut some arrows and amuse myself on the sands by shooting them just like Buffalo Bill. Behold your self-styled Jesus Christ."

## Chapter Two: Analyzing the *Volpini Suite*

The *Volpini Suite* was created at a crucial moment in Paul Gauguin's career. By 1889, the date of the Suite's creation, he had been painting full-time for six years, and had traveled to Martinique in 1887, Brittany in 1886 and 1888, and Arles where he stayed from 23 October to 23 December, 1888. According to Henri Mothéré's description, Gauguin had come into his own by 1889:

> Gauguin was forty-two years old in that year…His character was founded on ferocious cynicism; he had the selfishness of the genius, who believes the entire world to be a vehicle for the glorification of his power, or raw material for his personal creations.[1]

Throughout the second half of the 1880s, Gauguin experimented in painting, wood-carving, ceramics and printmaking, while traveling widely. This combination of artistic experimentation—the ease with which he moved between media, often bringing what he had learned from one to another—and the incorporation of "exotic" motifs into his art, led to Gauguin's artistic maturation by the end of the decade. In organizing the Volpini exhibition, Gauguin proclaimed himself a professional artist and the leader of a school of avant-garde artists. The *Volpini Suite* was a kind of self-portrait, advertising his subject matter and style. When selling or giving away the suite, Gauguin trimmed the margins of the frontispiece, adhered it to the front of a portfolio cover lined with blue marbled paper, and stored the ten untrimmed prints inside. The ten prints are unnumbered and appear to be without a specific order.

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[1]Charles Chassé, *Gauguin et son temps* (Paris : Bibliothèque des arts, 1955), 68-69. "Gauguin avait alors quarante-duex ans…La base de son caractère était un cynisme féroce, l'égoïsme du génie qui considère le monde entier comme une proie vouée à la glorification de sa puissance, comme une matière première de ses créations personnelles. "

Travel and the quest for exotic, unspoiled landscapes and cultures played a vital role in Gauguin's personal and artistic existence, and are of central importance to the *Volpini Suite*. The artist's first visit to Pont-Aven occurred in the summer of 1886. After a winter in Paris, he spent five months in Martinique in 1887. He returned to Brittany for eight months in 1888, leaving the north of France to join Vincent van Gogh in Arles for nine weeks at the end of 1888. Each exotic locale is reflected in the *Volpini Suite*, each period in Gauguin's career recorded therein. The prints reflect the personality of each place, landscape and the character of the people who inhabited it and their codes of behavior. The series summed up Gauguin's early career in a manner akin to Gustave Courbet's *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as a Painter*, 1855. The creation of the portfolio immediately preceded Gauguin's extremely productive third trip to Brittany. I will argue that the transformation of the subjects of several paintings into graphic format in the *Volpini Suite* encouraged Gauguin to redefine his style in the forthcoming Breton work, as well as the works of art from his first Tahitian journey. The *Volpini Suite* marks a watershed in Gauguin's artistic production and can be considered this first of his mature works of art.

In this chapter, I will address each of the eleven zincographs in the series, examining their compositions and their connections to related paintings, drawings, ceramics and wood-carvings. I will discuss the prints chronologically according to the locale to which they refer in the order of Gauguin's travels. I will first address the frontispiece, followed by the two compositions that derive from Pont-Aven: *Joys of Brittany (Joies de Bretagne)* and *Breton Women by a Fence (Bretonnes à la barrière).* The pair of prints describing Martinique, *Cicadas and Ants (Les Cigales et les fourmis)*

and *Martinique Pastoral (Pastorale Martinique)* are next discussed. Three compositions allude to le Pouldu, a seaside village north of Pont-Aven: *Breton Bathers (Baigneuses bretonnes),* and the pair *Dramas of the Sea, Brittany (Les Drames de la mer, Bretagne)* and *Dramas of the Sea, Descent into a Whirlpool (Les Drames de la mer, une descente dans le maelstrom).* The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the three Arles compositions: *Human Misery (Misère humaines), Washerwomen (Les Laveuses)* and *Old Women of Arles* (*Les Vieilles filles, Arles),* inspired by paintings made while Gauguin was living with Vincent van Gogh in the South of France. It is important to note that Gauguin himself did not make these distinctions or groupings among the works in the series. In fact, while some of the compositions—like the Martinique pair—clearly refer to one locale, Gauguin was not concerned with creating an accurate document of a place, but conflated aspects of different areas in several compositions. While acknowledging this, I have found it helpful to group the prints in terms of locale in order to grasp the character of each place as he saw it, to better understand the ways in which he transformed his painted compositions into a graphic format, and to decipher the themes that pervade the series.

**Frontispiece: *Project for a Plate: Leda and the Swan***

For copies of the *Volpini Suite* that were sold or given away, Gauguin hand-colored the frontispiece, *Design for a Plate: Leda and the Swan (Projet d'assiette—Leda et le cygne)* (figure 2.1), with watercolor and gouache, and adhered it to a portfolio cover lined with blue marbled paper. Of the eleven images in the series, its symbolism is the most overt, and the most universal. In Gauguin's design, Leda peers over her shoulder at a swan whose embracing wings enfold her bare shoulders. The bird's neck curves around

Leda's head, its beak hovering above her ear. A snake floats above them at the top left edge of the composition; two blossoms are tucked above Leda's shoulder, and in the right-hand distance, two tiny goslings with an apple approach the central figures. In one image, Gauguin juxtaposed the Christian symbols of the serpent and the apple with two of the most famous lovers in classical mythology, Leda with Zeus in the form of a swan, with their offspring, Castor and Pollox. These allusions to the universal themes of love, temptation and the fall of mankind are made specific to Brittany with the addition of the goslings, a motif that Gauguin closely associated with Pont-Aven. In fact, his seductive bird is more evocative of a goose than a swan.[2] A goose with an almost identical curving neck and two goslings appear on the cover of Gauguin's artist's portfolio, painted in watercolor and gouache in Pont-Aven in 1894 following his first trip to the South Seas (figure 2.2). Water fowl may be found in other compositions dating from Gauguin's trips to Pont-Aven such as *Breton Women Chatting (Bretonnes causant)*, 1886 (W. 2002, 237), *Goose Games (Jeux d'oies)*, 1888 (W. 2002, 274), and *Breton Woman and Goose by the Water (Bretonne et oie au bord de l'eau)*, 1888 (W.2002, 307). A goose is discernable in the background between rungs of the fence in *Bretons by a Fence*, one of the Pont-Aven subjects in the *Volpini Suite*.

Nowhere else in the portfolio does Gauguin overtly refer to myth or religion. That he chose to do so on the frontispiece seems to me indicative of his intentions for the meaning of the portfolio as a whole. The combination of Christian, classical and local symbols on the cover suggests that the portfolio would have universal and personal significance, and that while the suite is a chronicle of Gauguin's life as an artist thus far,

[2] Denise Delouche is currently doing research on swans and geese in Gauguin's oeuvre.

it is also concerned with the themes that have concerned great artists for centuries. Thus, the *Volpini Suite* becomes at once a personal document and one that proclaims Gauguin's status as an artist contending with the great themes of the past.

*Design for a Plate: Leda and the Swan* is one of three designs that Gauguin made for circular plates, all of which address the subject of love, in variously ironic terms. Any original drawing that Gauguin may have made for the zincograph has been lost, but two other gouache drawings for plate designs, both dated 1890, have survived. Both are playful ruminations on the pleasures and absurdities of love. One plate, *Long Live the Joys of Love (Vive les joies d'amour)* (figure 2.3) has at its center a basket heaped with fruit and flowers and a woman dressed in Breton costume. Also incorporated into the composition is a tiny alighting goose and a woman's Leda-like profile, turned on its side and hidden amongst the blossoms. The other design, *The Follies of Love* (*Les Folies de l'amour*), 1890 (figure 2.4), also overflows with floral motifs and visual references to Brittany. Against a white ground, two brilliant blue vases decorated with fleurs-de-lis hold wilting bouquets of flowers. The fleur-de-lis is not only the emblem of French royalty, but also of Brittany since the accession of Queen Anne of Brittany in 1491.[3] Do the wilting flowers allude to the impending demise of traditional French mores surrounding love? That Gauguin includes a peacock, traditionally an allusion to vanity, and a pig tied up like a gift with an enormous pink ribbon suggest that he was mocking lovers' repartee.[4] The mock date of "1290," referring back to the middle ages, may refer

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[3] Richard Brettell et. al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin* (Washington, D. C.: The National Gallery of Art, 1988), 182.

[4] Richard Brettel points out that pigs appear frequently Gauguin's Brittany paintings, and continued to be found in his Tahitian subjects, see Ibid., 183. Gauguin would have known the French proverb, "En tout homme il y a un couchon qui sommeille" (there is a sleeping pig

to Brittany's Celtic past. The drawings are related to the frontispiece of the *Volpini Suite* in the motifs of the oversized blossoms, the goose, and the numerous references to love. All three plate designs are more light-hearted and lack the dark cynicism of Gauguin's relief sculptures *Be in Love and You Will Be Happy (Soyez amoureuses vouz serez heureuses)*, 1889 (figure 2.5) and *Be Mysterious (Soyez mystérieuses)*, 1890 (figure 2.6). The organic forms of the flowers in the plate designs and the flowers among the waves in *Be Mysterious* are similar, as is the woman in profile who appears in some variation in each design. The critic Albert Aurier's comparison of the two woodcarvings is appropriate in terms of the range of meaning and implications in the *Volpini Suite* images. About the woodcarvings he wrote:

> How may we define the philosophy contained in this ironically titled bas-relief, *Soyez amoureuses et vous serez heureuses*, in which all lasciviousness, all the struggles of mind and flesh, and all the pain of sensual delight seem to writhe and gnash their teeth? And how are we to describe this other carving, *Soyez mystérieuses*, which by contrast celebrates the pure joys of esotericism? Are they disturbing symbols of mystery, or fantastic shadows in the forests of enigma?[5]

Aurier perceived the dual nature of the woodcarvings. As Gauguin laments the trials of love, anguishes over his fate as an outsider, and suffers with his own conflicted nature, he also delights in the same struggles and celebrates his status as a self-made outcast. Irony

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somewhere in every man). Gauguin's enjoyment of bawdy jokes is evident throughout his oeuvre, and this proverb may have informed his use of the motif. I thank Caroline Boyle-Turner for pointing out that pigs were common livestock in Brittany, that pork was an important product of the region, and that pigs ran wild in Tahiti, often in proximity to houses. Thus, pigs were a motif that referred to both locales within Gauguin's oeuvre. (Conversation on December 20, 2005.)

[5] Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en peinture," *Mercure de France* (March 1891), 165. "Comment dire la philosophie sculptée dans ce bas-relief ironiquement libellé : *Soyez amoureuses et vous serez heureuses*, où toute la Luxure, toute la lutte de la chair et de la pensée, toute la douleur des voluptés sexuelles se tordent et, pour ainsi dire, grincent des dents ? Comment évoquer cet autre bois sculpté : *Soyez mystérieuses*, qui célèbre les pures joies de l'ésotérisme, les troublants caressements de l'énigme, les fantastiques ombrages des forêts du problème ? "

and duality are present throughout the *Volpini Suite*. The frontispiece contrasts Christian belief with classical mythology, just as one print compliments and contradicts another.

Gauguin's first conception of the Leda design was realized in a stoneware vase, *Leda and the Swan* (figure 2.7), and a charcoal and watercolor drawing of portrait-vases (figure 2.8) which he made during the winter of 1887-1888. In the vase, the handle is formed by the head and neck of a swan, or goose. The face of Leda is on one side of the vase, and a design of whimsically drawn goslings is incised on the other. Among several of Gauguin's portrait vases, *Leda and the Swan* is formally and iconographically the most complex. In the ceramic as in the zincograph, rather than a knowingly seductive woman, Leda is a young girl with an innocent, quizzical expression. Behind her unfurls a long-necked, serpentine, phallic swan. She does not see the intruder, but seems to intuit its presence. Druick and Zegers have suggested that this image of dawning sexuality is complicated by Leda's resemblance to Gauguin's daughter, Aline. Thus, the ceramic gave expression to a variety of taboos, including rape, bestiality and incest.[6]

Why did Gauguin choose a design for a plate as the frontispiece when none of the images within the portfolio are thus shaped? It may have been his way of drawing parallels between his various attempts in ceramics and printmaking—for him, alternative ways to raise money aside from painting. The utilitarian vase is, of course, related to the plate design. Both are practical objects, just as, in theory, the project of the portfolio was a pragmatic way to promote his reputation as an artist. The printmaker Bracquemond, who had himself made ceramics for Haviland's potteries and at Sèvres, encouraged Gauguin to make ceramics and introduced him to the ceramicist Ernest Chaplet (1835-

[6] Douglas Druick and Peter Kort Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 89.

1909). Bracquemond also championed printmaking throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and was the inspiration behind La Société des aquafortistes, and later the Société des peintres-graveurs. As he encouraged Gauguin's early attempts in ceramics, he may also have encouraged Gauguin to begin making prints. Gauguin may have perceived ceramics and printmaking as similar strategies to make money and spread his reputation just as Manet and Pissarro before him had attempted to do through the making and selling of prints. However, although he initially had approached ceramics with the intention of raising much-needed cash, he allowed his imagination to take over, and the resulting pottery was far too esoteric for the taste of a buying public. Such was the case also with the zincographs. The print portfolio Gauguin ended up making was more of a personal artistic manifesto than a series of images that could easily be consumed by the public. Both the ceramics and the prints were unlike anything in their respective media that had come before, and all evidence points to the fact that they found no buying public.

Gauguin's choice of a circular format for the frontispiece is intriguing. Aside from the connection that he was drawing between his prints and ceramics by using such a design, the round form of the plate underscores the idea of encirclement, love and sex called forth by the myth of Leda and the swan. Gauguin used a variously shaped zinc plate for each of the eleven prints, reinforcing the independence of each composition. Aside from the frontispiece, the fan-shaped pair, *The Dramas of the Sea*, is the only other non-rectangular composition. Among the remaining eight rectangular compositions, each has slightly different dimensions. Such a choice of non-coherence is unusual in a print portfolio of the period. The non-uniformity of sizes of the plates and the varied subject

matter point to the fact that Gauguin did not intend the portfolio to be a cohesive whole, and suggests that although the project may have started out as a money-making scheme, or as ploy for self-promotion, it quickly became another means of self expression and experimentation, similar to his ceramics and paintings.

The inscription on the frontispiece, "homis [sic] soit qui mal y pense. P. Go.," printed in reverse, is even more enigmatic than the inscriptions on Gauguin's other two plate designs. Translated literally, the phrase reads: "Shame on those who think evil." Alternatively it has been interpreted as, "Those in glass houses should not throw stones"[7] Both translations have been understood as indicative of the moral ambiguity that at least one author has found pervasive throughout the series.[8] Gauguin may have been aware that "Honi soit qui mal y pense" is the motto of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.[9] According to tradition, the saying originated from a remark made by the Edward III of England to one of his ladies of the court, warning against the dangers of making moral judgements based on deceptive appearances.

There is also a personal dimension to the inclusion of the phrase, "homis [sic] soit qui mal y pense." While living in Le Pouldu during the summer of 1889, Gauguin, along with his friends Jacob Meyer de Haan and Paul Sérusier, stayed in the inn of Marie Henry. There, they decorated the walls and ceiling of the dining room. Parts of the

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[7] Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent Van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), 195. Although her translation is less literal, like Brettel, Welsh-Ovcharov also understands the inscription as indicative of Gauguin's criticism of society's hypocrisies concerning sexual relations.

[8] For example, see Brettel, et. al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, 132.

[9] Adrian Room, ed., *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (London: Cassell, 2001), 584. The motto is usually rendered as "evil be to him who evil thinks" although "shame to him" would be more accurate.

decorative scheme--paintings on canvas, wood, and plaster—have survived, others exist only in photographs dating from the 1920s, and some components of the room have been completely lost.[10] The ceiling design—known from a photograph—is of particular interest in this discussion; on the ceiling, which is now lost, Gauguin painted two stylized double-headed geese configured in a heraldic fashion and surrounded by onions (figure 2.9), a motif that Meyer de Haan had himself used in one of the decorations he painted for the room. Inscribed in one corner of Gauguin's ceiling design is the phrase, "ONI SOIE ki mâle y panse," a curious play on the inscription on the *Design for a Plate* as well as a play upon the Breton language. The inscription may refer to the clandestine relationship between Meyer de Haan and Marie Henry and the fact that they had a daughter together. Gauguin's substitution of "mâle" for "mal" makes the phrase significant to the couple; the French word "mâle" refers to a male animal such as a cock, or a rooster, which in turn is a play on the name "de Haan" which translates into Dutch as "the rooster." The phrase may be interpreted as a whimsical defense of the couple from town gossip. The link of the inscription on the plate to the ceiling design of the Marie Henry's inn emphasizes the sexual overtones of the frontispiece, and of the series. That a swan, goose or geese are twice paired with the inscription underscores the erotic overtones of the bird. Gauguin's monogram "PGO," which appears on the frontispiece as well as many paintings of the period, is a pun on the words *pégo* or pégot, French slang

[10] For a discussion of the program of decorations in the inn of Marie Henry, see Robert Welsh, "Gauguin and the Inn of Marie Henry at Pouldu," in Eric Zafran, ed., *Gauguin's Nirvana: Painters at le Pouldu 1889-1890* (New Haven: Hartford: Yale University Press and Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2001), 61-79; and M. A. Anquetil, M. Barbey, J. M. Cuisenberche et al, *Le Chemin de Gauguin, genèse et rayonnement* (Saint Germain en Laye: Musée Departméntal du Prieré, 1986), 98-135.

for uncouth, clodhopper, or peasant. [11] Gauguin's identification of himself as a boorish peasant is in keeping with the image of himself as a savage that he perpetuated from the mid-1880s.

The frontispiece is decorative, and there is a conspicuous lack of perspective in its design.[12] A snake, goslings and flowers float weightlessly around the central figures. The reversed inscription along the upper edge of the composition reads like a decorative border.[13] Gauguin's design, word play, and deliberate attempt to foil a coherent reading of the frontispiece image supercede scale, or traditional compositional structure or narrative. The intentional lack of perspective, scale, and decorative surfaces can be found throughout the series; it is especially apparent in Gauguin's treatment of water, in the stylized treatment of the trees, and in the dense layering of patterns, all of which will be discussed further in this chapter

**Pont-Aven: *Joys of Brittany* and *Bretons by a Fence***

The subject matter of two zincographs in the *Volpini Suite* clearly derives from Brittany, the first exotic locale to which Gauguin traveled as a full-time artist. It was in

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[11] Lazar Saineanu, *Le Langage parisien au XIXe siècle. Facteurs sociaux, contingents linguistiques, faits sémantiques, influences littéraires* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1920), 306.

[12] Caroline Boyle-Turner compares the cover design to Gauguin's contemporary painting*, Still Life with Three Puppies* (W. 293), stating that in both works, the design supercedes the perspective and conventional compositional structure. She perceives proportion and scale in both works as arbitrary. A similar thick black outline around each object unites them all in a decorative two-dimensional pattern. Caroline Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his Circle in Brittany* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), 42.

[13] Gauguin may have been familiar with Bracquemond's designs for plates, such as the Rousseau Service, which are one of the premier examples of the influence of Japonisme on late-nineteenth-century French art. Birds figure prominently in these designs.

this remote, seacoast region that he began to depart from his Impressionist beginnings and define his own style, which would be characterized by simplified, exaggerated forms accentuated with bold outlines.

In 1886, with his friend Charles Laval, Gauguin sought refuge from Paris in the artistic community of Pont-Aven. The two men were attracted to the area for its picturesque landscape and affordable living; the traditional costumes of the villagers had inspired generations of artists before Gauguin.[14] Gauguin first stayed in Pont-Aven from July to October 1886, and returned for a second ten-month stay in 1888. Early in 1888 he described his affection for the region in a now-famous letter to Schuffenecker:

> You are a Parisianist. Give me the country. I love Brittany. I find in it the savage and the primitive. When my clogs ring out on this granite ground I hear the dull, muted, and powerful tone that I am trying to find in painting...All that is very sad…but to each painter his own character."[15]

*Joys of Brittany* (figure 2.10) and *Bretons by a Fence* (figure 2.11) borrow motifs from paintings of Pont-Aven subjects, vastly revising the paintings to which they relate. The two zincographs demonstrate the dramatic changes in Gauguin's style between 1886 and 1889. They provide glimpses into the Breton female world, one of its youth, the other of its matrons. There exists a harmony in these images, an integration of the forms in nature that suggests Gauguin's idealization of rural Breton life, and what he perceived as the locals' "unspoiled" relationship with nature. Although Gauguin's initial visit to

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[14] For a thorough discussion of this subject, see André Cariou, *Les Peintres de Pont-Aven* (Rennes: Editions Oust-France, 2004).

[15] Gauguin to Schuffenecker, Pont-Aven, February 1888. Victor Merlhès, *Paul Gauguin et Vincent van Gogh, 1887-1888, Lettres retrouvées, sources ignorées* (Tahiti: Taravoa, 1989), 61-3. "Vous êtes parisianiste. Et à moi la campagne. J'aime la Bretagne; j'y trouve le sauvage le primitive. Quand mes sabots résonnent sur ce sol de granit j'entends le ton sourd mat et puissant que je cherche en peinture. Tout celà est bien triste…mais à chaque peintre son caractère."

Brittany was motivated by the necessity to live more cheaply than was possible in Paris, once there, he immediately appreciated both the traditional culture with its Celtic origins and the people who retained their language, costumes, and customs. He found the Breton culture "primitive," close to nature, and unspoiled by the prejudices of modern, urban life. The search for a primordial religious and philosophical knowledge that led him as far as the Marquesas began in the French province of Pont-Aven.

In the zincograph *Joys of Brittany*, two Breton girls wearing traditional coiffes and clogs are out-of-doors in a field amongst large stacks of hay. In the background are the rolling hills of Pont-Aven; over one crest, the spire of a church is just visible. The girls' scale is monumental—the right figure nearly fills the vertical picture plane. They are caught in the midst of a dance, the left figure is seen from the back with her head turned in profile, about to disappear behind a haystack. The girls' clasped hands are obscured behind the right figure. A rectangular border is drawn around the image, but it is penetrated at the top by the curve of a haystack, and, even more remarkably, at the left by the suggestion of a haystack and two little dogs, one black and the other light with spots, who have escaped the confines of the landscape. The dogs mirror the figures, one of whom wears a black dress, the other gray with a striped pinafore. The little dogs who break free of the margins surrounding the central picture are reminders of the artifice and craft of the picture. Gauguin makes full use of the medium, carefully differentiating the girls' garments, the quick short strokes of the grass, the long curving lines of the haystacks, and the grainy, textured pattern that differentiates the figures from the background.

I have tracked down in public and private collections in the United States and Europe at least one impression of each print in the *Volpini Suite* that is touched with watercolor. Gauguin may have hand-colored a complete set upon the request of a particular collector—Samuel Josefowitz has suggested that they were likely made for Gustav Fayet—or the artist may have colored them upon his own volition. Interestingly, two hand-colored versions of *Joys of Brittany* exist, one in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (figure 2.12) the other in a private collection (figure 2.13). In both impressions, the flowers pinned to the right-hand figure's dress are colored red. In the impression in the MFA, the field and haystacks are touched with pink, while in the private collection impression, they are colored pale green.[16]

The two figures are related to Gauguin's painting, *Circle Dance of the Breton Girls* (*La Ronde des petites Bretonnes*), 1888 (W. 2002, 296) (figure 2.14). The painting was made in June 1888 when Gauguin was in Pont-Aven, and he deposited it for sale with Theo van Gogh at Boussod et Valadon in November 1888. Theo van Gogh found a buyer for the painting, and sent the canvas to Gauguin in Arles for minor retouching of the left figure's hand. Therefore, the composition would have been at the forefront of Gauguin's consciousness when working on the *Volpini Suite* in the winter of 1889. Of his Pont-Aven images, it is the one in which the traditional Breton costume is most exactly recorded, and it well represented his paintings of the area and the locals.

Gauguin made at least two preparatory drawings for *Circle Dance of the Breton Girls*. One is a pastel in which the three figures are observed close-up against a brilliant blue sky (figure 2.15). Gauguin trimmed the sheet of this drawing into an irregular,

[16] I thank Peter Kort Zegers for drawing my attention to the hand-colored impression in the private collection, and for supplying a photograph.

undulating outline that followed the girls' movements as they danced. After the drawing had served its original purpose as a preparatory study for the painting, Gauguin retouched it, and gave it to Theo van Gogh as a gift in thanks for fifty francs that the dealer sent him in Brittany.[17] Gauguin also made a study in charcoal and pastel of two figures dancing (figure 2.16). It is likely that Gauguin kept this drawing in his possession and used it as a model for the zincograph. The figures' profiles and the exact form of the *coiffe*, which is higher and more pointed than in the painting, are precisely reproduced in the zincograph.

*Circle Dance of the Breton Girls* is one of Gauguin's most successful paintings from his second trip to Brittany. In the composition, three girls with clasped hands dance while hay is being made in a brilliant yellow-green field. The composition shows the traditional Fest Noz dance of the harvest that was held out-of-doors, in the fields.[18] Festive red blossoms are pinned to the figures' dark dresses; a flowering red tree blossoms in the background. Houses and a church are just beyond a stone wall; the children play on the outskirts of the town. A small dog acts as the figures' companion. The atmosphere is bucolic, even languid.

In revising the composition for the zincograph, Gauguin simplified his scheme. The group of three figures is limited to two, and details of the towns minimized and relegated to the distant background. The church and the stone wall are present as they were in the painting, but they are distanced from the figures in the graphic version. In addition, the scale of the figures has been utterly changed. Instead of diminutive figures easily encompassed by the surrounding landscape in the painting, the figures in the print

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[17] Ronald de Leeuw, *Paintings and Pastels: The Van Gogh Museum* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1994), 194.

[18] My thanks to Caroline Boyle-Turner for pointing this out in conversation, December 20, 2005.

are monumental. The haystacks, merely small piles in the painting, are more akin to the towering stone formations of the region in the zincograph. The combination of these changes renders the children more remote from adult society. They are more separate, more ambiguous; the setting has an aura of mystery. With the omission of the third figure, their activity is no longer as clearly identifiable as dance. Combined with their serious gazes and the exotic physiognomy of the right figure, their movements resemble a procession or a sacred rite. The detail of the outstretched, exaggerated hand that Gauguin was asked to remedy in the painting was reinstated in the zincograph.

This is the only image in the portfolio that includes children. Two early portraits of Gauguin's children, *Little Dream* (*La Petite rêve*), 1881 (W. 2002, 75) (figure 2.17), a painting of his daughter, Aline, at about three-and-a-half years old, and *Clovis Asleep* (*Clovis endormi*),1884 (W. 2002, 151) (figure 2.18), a portrait of Gauguin's second son with his childish blonde head resting on a table as he dozes, demonstrate how children exemplified that which Gauguin valued as primitive and unspoiled. In both images, childhood is a place of fantasy, dreams, and imagination no longer accessible to adults. Such admiration for the state of childhood may be related to his idealization of rural Breton life. For Gauguin, both children and rural peasants were closer to nature, guileless, uncorrupted. The evocative, colorful, richly decorated backgrounds of the pictures of Aline and Clovis asleep articulate the dream world of children; their imaginations equated with birds in flight which populate the background wallpapers of both paintings. *Joys of Brittany*, an image of peasant children dancing amidst haystacks, epitomized what Gauguin idealized about the "primitive" and his idealization of childhood. What of the title *Joys of Brittany*? Given the irony of his inscription on the

frontispiece, one cannot help but question its meaning. As the children are remote from their village, are the "joys of Brittany" also too remote for the adult viewer to comprehend?

*Bretons by a Fence*, a composition of two matrons in traditional Breton dress gazing out at the landscape, is a foil for *Joys of Brittany*. The two figures occupy the right half of the composition; depicted in three-quarters length, their massive figures are imposing. The figure with her back to the viewer and arms akimbo seems to survey the rural view, her stance self-assured. The figures stand beside a fence with undulating rungs through which another seated female figure, a goose, and a cow may be glimpsed. Trees and houses are tucked beyond in the hills in a manner similar to the background of *Joys of Brittany*. The figures are perfectly integrated into the landscape; their stance suggests ownership that excludes the viewer. The women's postures and the lack of description in their faces are forbidding, and the fence separates us from the pastoral landscape. The ease with which the most distant figure sits upon the earth—also with her back to us—is not offered to the viewer. The bucolic view is available to outsiders, but the image suggests that the life beyond the fence is not accessible. The fence—a traditional emblem of domesticity—may be read as alluding to the circumscribed life of women in Brittany. In this conservative and traditionally religious regions in France, the lives of Breton women were restricted to domestic responsibilities, the chores of farm life, and the practice of Catholicism.

A hand-colored impression of *Bretons by a Fence* is now in a private collection in Atlanta, Georgia (figure 2.20).[19] Washes of green watercolor mixed with gouache cover

[19] I am grateful to Sotheby's for their assistance in identifying the current owners of this hand-colored impression.

the fields and distant trees, ranging from pale, transparent washes to a nearly opaque, dark hue, almost obliterating the yellow paper beneath. The figures' *coiffes* are colored white, as are the spotted passages of the cow and the foreground figure's dress. The skirt of the figure with her arms akimbo is colored brown.

The figure of the woman with her arms akimbo is based on the central figure in *Breton Women Chatting (Bretonnes Causant)* (W. 2002, 237) (figure 2.21), a painting that Gauguin apparently made in his studio in Paris in 1886 from drawings that he brought back from Pont-Aven. [20] In the painting, a cluster of four Breton women stand out-of-doors conversing. They form an enclosed, loose circle into which the viewer may enter only by peering over the shoulders of the central figure, who stands with her back to the viewer, hands on her hips. The three other figures are in profile. Four geese in the middle-ground mimic the gaggle of women. A Breton man working in the fields may be glimpsed in the right background, but his relegation to the far distance emphasizes the matriarchal nature of the painting's subject.[21] The semi-circular group of women appears self-contained, excluding the presumably male viewer.

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[20] Wildenstein has concluded that this is a studio painting because the direct observation of landscape plays no role in the composition, and because there are a number of drawings related to the figures. Daniel Wildenstein, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, 1873-1888*, vols. 1-2 (Paris; Milan: Wildenstein Institute; Skira editors, 2002), 2:300-304.

[21] One of Gauguin's first compositions dedicated to large-scale Breton figures, *Bretons by a Fence* owes an obvious dept to Degas. Degas posed his models with their arms akimbo in a number of paintings, such as *The Bellelli Family*, 1858-67, *The Dance Class*, 1874, and in a drawing, *Standing Dancer from Behind*, c. 1873. In addition, the momentary, fleeting quality of Gauguin's composition and the cropping of the monumental figures are evocative of Degas' influence which had superseded that of Pissarro in the period following Gauguin's first visit to Brittany. Degas's art was a touchstone for Gauguin as the younger artist diverged from the brushy, Impressionistic technique that characterized his early work, and moved toward an increasingly personal style. The two artists had met in 1879, and Gauguin quickly recognized Degas as a mentor. Although their relationship became strained in 1882 when Gauguin became

The anecdotal quality of the painting is undermined in the simplified composition of the zincograph. In the painting, the colorful cluster of chatting women with their brilliant white *coiffes* and collars is almost buoyant; the mood is one of lightness. This pictorial celebration of Breton life and customs, however, is eclipsed in the lithograph. In the print, the contrast of surface pattern and texture takes precedence over the subject.[22] The momentariness of the scene and the fleeting gestures are no longer the focus, but, instead, the overall arrangement and rhythm of figures, fence, and landscape is emphasized. The pattern created by the fence is echoed by trees and by the stripes in the woman's skirt, just as the amorphous, circular pattern in the other figure's dress is repeated by the spots on the cow and the foliage in the background. Surface and pattern are the subjects of this print, just as flat passages of color would become the subject of many of the artist's Tahitian compositions.

In *Avant et Après* Gauguin wrote, "A critic at my house sees some paintings. Greatly perturbed, he asks for my drawings. My drawings? Never! They are my letters, my secrets…"[23] Gauguin filled his sketchbooks—stockpiles of ideas—with motifs that he would recycle in various media, over years. Undoubtedly too, he realized that his

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involved in the complicated intrigues surrounding the Impressionist exhibitions, they renewed their acquaintanceship in 1886. Degas periodically bought Gauguin's paintings, and Gauguin returned to Degas' art throughout his career, particularly whenever he was shifting direction. Although numerous scholars, including Françoise Cachin, have acknowledged the debt that Gauguin owed Degas, the older artist's influence on the *Volpini Suite* has not been discussed.

[21] Degas' influence is evident in the contorted poses and dramatic cropping of some of the figures and in the flattened spaces of many of the lithographs.

[22] Christopher Conrad addresses this idea in "Technique as Stimulus for the Artist's Imagination—Gauguin's Print Oeuvre," Christoph Becker, ed., *Paul Gauguin: Tahiti* (Osttfildern-Ruit: G. Hatje, 1998), 114**.**

[23] Paul Gauguin, *Intimate Journals*, trans. Van Wyck Brooks (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), 115.

drawings were often awkward trials and thus was unwilling to share them. Once he identified a figure in a pose that he liked, he returned to it repeatedly in various contexts. His penchant for the figure with her hands on hips may be seen both in his preliminary drawing for the figure in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum (figure 2.21), and in a ceramic vase decorated with Breton scenes made during the winter of 1886-87 (figure 2.22). The vase is one of the few surviving examples of the collaboration between Gauguin and Ernest Chaplet. While Gauguin modeled most of his ceramics himself, Chaplet's stamp on the underside indicates that this vase was thrown by Chaplet on a wheel. Gauguin or Chaplet may have subsequently added the glaze with its simplified, incised contours and decorative gold highlights.[24] In comparing the vase with the painting, one notes that the medium of the ceramic required Gauguin to simplify his motifs and technique. The same may be said for the zincographs; the surface of the zinc plate and the restriction of printing in only one color of ink called for Gauguin to re-evaluate and simplify his compositions to suit his media.

**Martinique: *Martinique Pastoral* and *Cicadas and Ants***

Eager for a tropical setting where life would be easy and cheap, along with Charles Laval, Gauguin set sail for Panama in June 1887, where he hoped that his brother-in-law who had settled there would help him to settle and find employment**.** Quickly dispossessed of his illusions, Gauguin was forced to earn money by working for a company that was excavating the canal, and was fired after only a fortnight. Gauguin

[24] Brettel et. al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, 69. Brettel points out that Gauguin abandoned the vase to Chaplet, suggesting that the artist did not hold it in esteem. Chaplet later exhibited it at the *Troisième Exposition de la libre esthétique* in Brussels in 1896 where was purchased by the Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire, Brussels.

and Laval decided to see if they could fare better in Martinique, where they had briefly set anchor on the voyage out. They arrived in Saint-Pierre, which, until the eruption of Mount Pelée, was the capital of Martinique, and stayed about five months. During this time in which he was plagued by malaria and dysentery, Gauguin produced fewer than twenty paintings; their primary subjects are landscapes in which figures play roles of varying significance.[25] Although few in number, the Martinique paintings marked a significant milestone in the artist's career. Gauguin wrote to Schuffenecker that he believed that some of his Martinique paintings were better than those of his earlier Pont-Aven period.[26]

Indeed, the Martinique paintings are, on the whole, executed with great freedom, their surfaces more decorative than the compositions that immediately preceded them. Gauguin's practice in the Martinique pictures of placing subtly mixed colors within discreet outlines seems to foreshadow the Synthetist breakthrough of the following year. The Martinique works have been described as a "surprising but ephemeral glimpse of the future" which, upon his return to Paris gave way to a return to classical Impressionism.[27]

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[25] There has been dispute as to the precise number of paintings that Gauguin executed in Martinique. According to Wildenstein, while in the Caribbean, Gauguin produced sixteen paintings now known to us: seven landscapes, seven works in which figures play an important role, and two still lifes; Wildenstein, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making, Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 1: 318.

[26] Gauguin to Schuffenecker, Martinique, undated, September 1887 (letter 57), Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends*, ed. Malingue, 86. "To tell you frankly my situation here, I am still ill and will never be well in this climate, the arrival of every post brings on a relapse due to emotional shock. In spite of this I am limping along in an effort to make up for lost time and to make some good pictures. I shall bring back a dozen canvases, four of them with figures far superior to my Pont-Aven period."

[27] Wildenstein, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 319.

It was not until the latter part of Gauguin's 1888 stay in Brittany that the discoveries he made in Martinique forged their way into his signature aesthetic.

Unlike the zincographs after Pont-Aven subjects, the two Martinique prints do not reinterpret specific canvases. Instead, Gauguin drew more generally from the Martinique imagery that he considered most successful, taking motifs from various canvases, and with them, devising entirely new compositions. For instance, *Martinique Pastoral* (figure 2.23) and *Cicadas and Ants* (figure 2.24) combine elements of *Fruit Picking*, or *Mangoes (La Cueillette des fruit* or *Aux Mangos)*, 1887 (W. 2002, 250) (figure 2.25), the most elaborate of Gauguin's Martinique compositions. *Fruit Picking* was considered by Theo and Vincent van Gogh, Bernard, and Gauguin himself as the most important painting of this period, and was purchased by Theo van Gogh for his personal private collection.

In *Martinique Pastoral*, two native women stand in the left foreground, their bodies sinuous and swaying. Upon his arrival to the Caribbean, Gauguin immediately appreciated the native women of Martinique. Describing them in a letter to Schuffenecker, he remarked:

> I smile the most before these figures, each day there is a continual coming and going of Negro women dressed in colorful rags, with an infinite variety of graceful movements. Actually, I am confining myself to making sketch after sketch in order to understand their characters, and then I shall have them pose. While carrying heavy loads on their heads, they chat incessantly. Their gestures are quite extraordinary; their hands play an important role, in harmony with the swaying of their hips.[28]

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[28] Gauguin to Schuffenecker, beginning of July 1887, Paul Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin,* ed. Victor Merlhès (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), 156-7. "Ce qui me sourit le plus, ce sont les figures, et chaque jour c'est un va-et-vient continuel de négresses accoutrées d'oripeaux de couleur avec des mouvements gracieux variés à l'infini. Actuellement je me borne à faire croquis sur croquis afin de me pénétrer de leur caractère et ensuite je les ferai poser. Tout en portant de lourdes charges sur la tête elles bavardent sans cesse. Leurs gestes sont très particuliers et les mains jouent un grand rôle en harmonie avec le balancement des hanches."

This swaying of the hips and the elegance of the figures' hands is so clearly defined in *Pastoral Martinique* that the pair seem to dance.[29] The figures' long pale dresses with delicate patterns are balanced by a tree whose branch answers the curves of the bodies. The decorative pattern of leaves and grasses are repeated in dresses and kerchiefs. The curves of the feminine figures are answered by the sinuous forms of the tropical landscape. Beneath a large tree, a goat nurses its kid, underscoring the fecundity of the lush surroundings and its inhabitants. The distant hilly landscape dense with foliage is rendered in every conceivable shade and pattern of gray tusche. *Pastorale Martinique* is one of the most densely worked plates in the suite. Unfortunately, I have not located a hand-colored impression of this print; it is possible that none has survived, or even that none was made.

While *Martinique Pastoral* alludes to the fertility of the women, animals, and the landscape of the Caribbean, *Cicadas and Ants* alludes to a fable by Jean de la Fontaine of the same title. In Gauguin's zincograph, several women populate a beach; some carry burdens in baskets, elegantly balanced on their heads, others settle into various states of repose on the sand. The bay of Saint-Pierre and the hills of Martinique stretch across the background. Slender mango trees grow along the women's path, creating a graceful rhythm of figures and nature.

La Fontaine's *Les Cigales et les fourmis,* written in 1668, based on Aesop's fable, provided a source of inspiration to numerous artists of the nineteenth century.[30]

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[29] In the background, one may detect a Caucasian female figure with her back to the viewer who has little of the grace of the foreground women.

[30] Kirsten H. Powell analyzes numerous works of art which address *Les Cigales et les fourmis*; see Kirsten H. Powell, *Fables in Frames: La Fontaine and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997).

According to the fable, after having sung all summer, the cicada finds herself without food. She approaches her neighbor the ant to lend her enough food to sustain her through the winter. Hearing that the cicada has sung all summer, the ant refuses. Because she has been singing instead of industriously preparing for winter, the ant tells her that now she must dance, thereby abandoning her to death. The ant is a worker, concerned with the economic factors of future supply and demand—in short a *bourgeoisie*—while the cicada is a bohemian artist who lives for the moment.[31] The idle figures reclining on the beach represent cicadas who contribute song to their community, while the trio of figures arranged across the composition like three graces, balancing burdens atop their heads, are the ants, continuously at work, but deaf to the song around them.

Gauguin's complete manuscript of *Noa Noa*, now in the collection of the Musée du Louvre, includes a narrative episode concerning the La Fontaine fable. The vignette concerns the Maori Princess Vaitua's visit to Gauguin who is ill and confined to his hut.

> In a very serious and sonorous voice, she began to recite entirely this fable of La Fontaine, The Cicada and the Ant. (A pretty memory of her childhood spent with the nuns who had instructed her.) The cigarette was almost burned up; she stands up:
> --You know, Gauguin, she tells me, I do not like your La Fontaine.
> --What! We call him the good La Fontaine.
> --Perhaps he is good, but he bothers me with his nasty morals. The ants! (And her mouth expressed disgust.) The cicadas! How I love them. It is beautiful, so good to sing. To always sing. To always give. And with pride she added: What a beautiful kingdom ours was, where man, like the earth, abounded in natural riches, we sang all year long.[32]

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[31] Ibid., 114.

[32] Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa, edition definitive* (Paris: Les Editions G. Crès et cie, 1929), 40. "D'une voix très grave et cuivrée elle se mit à réciter entièrement cette fable de La Fontaine, la Cigale et la Fourmi. (Un joli souvenir de son enfance passée chez les Soeurs qui l'avaient instruite.) La cigarette était toute partie en fumée; elle se leva.
--Tu sais, Gauguin, me dit-elle, je n'aime pas ton La Fontaine.
--Comment! Nous qui l'appelons le bon La Fontaine.

Gauguin used the princess' voice to critique the fable. In his interpretation, Gauguin not only attacked bourgeois values but also the forced imposition of those values inherent in European colonialism.[33]

*Cicadas and Ants* is one of two plates in the *Volpini Suite* with a literary source; the other, *The Dramas of the Sea*, alludes to a short story by Edgar Allan Poe, "Descent into the Maelström." By incorporating into his suite of prints a well known French fable and a short story by an American author, translated into French by Charles Baudelaire, Gauguin identified himself as an artist who sought out a variety of sources, both high and low, home-spun and exotically foreign. It is not surprising that La Fontaine's fables resonated with Gauguin. Their deceptive simplicity, self-conscious naïveté, and dialogue with nature and culture bore marked parallels with Gauguin's own aesthetic and iconographic concerns.[34]

The composition and subject of *Cicadas and Ants* is similar to that of the painting *Fruit Porters at Turin Bight* (*Porteuses de fruits à l'anse Turin*), 1887 (W. 2002, 253) (figure 2.26). In the painting, a procession of figures carrying baskets walks along the

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--Peut-être est-il bon, mais il m'embête avec ses vilaines morales. Les fourmis! (Et sa bouche indiquait le dégoût.) Les cigales! Comme je les aime. C'est si beau, si bon de chanter. Chanter toujours. Donner toujours…toujours. Et avec fierté, elle ajouta: Quel beau royaume était le nôtre, celui où l'homme comme la terre prodiguait ses bienfaits, nous chantions toute l'année."

[33] Powell, *Fables in Frames*, 120.

[34] Although the zincograph *Cicadas and Ants* was the only occasion upon which Gauguin referred to La Fontaine's fables in his art, the fable "the Wolf and the Dog" ("Le Loup et le chien") offered Gauguin the opportunity to justify his art and way of life. In a letter to Charles Morice, Gauguin referred to Puvis de Chavannes as a Greek, "whereas I am a savage, a wolf in the woods without a collar." Gauguin to Morice, Tahiti, July 1901 (letter 174), Malingue, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends*, 227. According to the fable, a hungry wolf envies a well-fed dog until he notices the heavy collar that has rubbed his neck bare. Given the choice of freedom or a collar, the wolf chooses his freedom.

famous "fruit path" which wound along the coast of the bay of Saint-Pierre, the capitol of Martinique. As the procession passes by, two women seek refuge in the shade of trees in the painting's foreground. In this Caribbean paradise, a lone sailboat floats on the brilliant blue bay enclosed by distant hills.

Women bearing burdens along the fruit-path was one of Gauguin's primary subjects in Martinique. Paintings such as *Saint-Pierre Roadstead (La Rade de Saint-Pierre vue de l'anse Turin)* (W. 2002, 242) (figure 2.27) and *Comings and Goings (Allées et venues)* (W. 2002, 245) (figure 2.28) make such figures in lush landscapes their subjects. During the late nineteenth century, many properties in the region of Le Carbet, south of Saint-Pierre, produced guavas, mangoes, bananas, coconuts, and sweet potatoes. Women carried the produce to town daily either by the so-called "fruit path" which started in the Mouillage quarter on the flank of Orange Hill and ran along the coast, or by the route des Mornes, which wound through the fruit-producing foot-hills of the interior.[35] The native women of Martinique were known for their beauty and industry. They frequently worked in the cane fields or on plantations picking fruit, and were trained from childhood to carry merchandise on their heads in traits, or baskets. Known as *porteuses*, they transported most of Martinique's light goods on foot with tremendous endurance and energy, walking barefoot up to fifty miles each day, carrying traits which weighed 100-150 pounds. They were highly respected for this feat, and because of their grace and stamina, they were considered by many visitors to be the Caribbean's greatest natural beauty.[36]

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[35] Wildenstein, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 2: 317.

[36] Karen Kristine Rechnitzer Pope, "Gauguin and Martinique," Ph.D. diss. (University of Texas, Austin, 1981), 86-7.

Gauguin gave greater prominence to the figures in the graphic version of his Martinique subjects than in his paintings of similar Caribbean subjects; the figures in the zincographs are larger and rendered in greater detail. More attention is given to the patterns of the textiles and baskets, and to the curves of their bodies and the elegance of their poses. Mantegna's *Parnassus (Venus and Mars)* and Titian's/Giorgione's *Concert champêtre* have been suggested as possible sources for the figures in *Cicadas and Ants*.[37] I interpret the three burden-bearers as Gauguin's interpretation of the theme of the three graces. The three viewpoints of the figures—frontal, back and profile—perfectly articulate his notion of exotic, ideal feminine beauty. An extraordinarily balanced rhythm is created by the hands of the two standing figures at the right which hover near each other but do not touch. *Cicadas and Ants* is the most classically composed composition in the *Volpini Suite*; the figures dance across a composition that resembles a bas-relief frieze.

The partially nude seated figure is noteworthy in the context of Gauguin's Martinique paintings of 1887; he painted no nudes during his stay in Martinique. With luminous skin and a relaxed, casual pose this figure foreshadows the Tahitian nudes Gauguin executed during his first trip to the South Seas from 1891-1893.

The elegant, feminine contours in the Martinique prints are diametrically opposed to the amorphous forms of his Breton figures. Likewise, the classical sense of balance in the Martinique images differs dramatically from the Brittany subjects. Classical beauty, rhythm, and a sinuous line are joined in these compositions to create a harmonious

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[37] Conrad, "Technique as Stimulus for the Artist's Imagination—Gauguin's Print Oeuvre," in Becker, *Paul Gauguin: Tahiti*, 115.

meeting of figure and landscape. These are visions of an exotic paradise whose figures are not subsumed by the landscape as in the Brittany subjects, but are in perfect union with it. This pair of zincographs evokes an even greater harmony between figure and landscape than did his 1887 paintings of the island. In the way that the figures and landscape attract and hold the viewer's attention equally, the two prints anticipate Gauguin's early Tahitian paintings.

The Martinique pair is remarkable for the array of textures that it conveys. *Martinique Pastoral* is stunning in its layering of patterns, from the bark of the tree, to the women's dresses and turbans, to the fur of the goat and to the hilly landscape in the background. All of this Gauguin achieved by using a variety of brushwork, combining lavis and lithographic washes. He was able to achieve such a wide range of grays in this image by using lithographic ink diluted to different concentrations.

**Le Pouldu: *Breton Bathers* and *Dramas of the Sea***

The landscapes in *Breton Bathers* (figure 2.29) and the pair *Dramas of the Sea* (figures 2.30 and 2.31) derive from Le Pouldu, a Breton seaside hamlet about forty-seven kilometers east of Pont-Aven. Due to an incorrectly dated letter, it was long assumed that Gauguin did not discover this out-of-the-way village until his third visit to Brittany in 1889-90. More recent scholarship has revealed, however, that numerous paintings done previous to the third visit demonstrate his earlier familiarity with the dramatic landscape of Le Pouldu.[38] Paintings such as *Cow on the Porsac'h Cliffs* or *Over the Abyss (Vache*

[38] Welsh-Ovcharov, "Paul Gauguin's Third Visit to Brittany, June 1889-November 1890," in Zafran, *Gauguin's Nirvana: Painters at Le Pouldu 1889-1890*, 15-59.

*sur la falaise à Porsac'h* or *Au-dessus du gouffre),* 1888 (W. 2002, 310) (figure 2.32) which describe the topography of Le Pouldu, reveal that the area's dramatic coastal landscape was already inspiring paintings made during Gauguin's second Breton stay. Although by the 1920s, Le Pouldu had become a beach resort, at the time that Gauguin and Meyer de Haan moved into the inn of Marie Henry in June of 1889, the population of the seaside hamlet numbered fewer than 150 inhabitants. In their paintings of that year, Gauguin and de Haan sought to depict the poor, seafaring community's struggle to eke out a living amidst the forces of nature. Each of Gauguin's three Le Pouldu images in the *Volpini Suite—Breton Bathers* and the pair *Dramas of the Sea*—explore what I have identifed as the dual nature of the sea.

In the zincograph, *Breton Bathers*, a nude figure hesitantly approaches the sea. Gauguin renders the figure's gender ambiguous; it is only upon close inspection that a breast, almost concealed by the figure's arm, is visible. She is boyish, her dark hair short, her profile with its upturned nose and curving forehead childlike and similar to the Leda figure's profile in the frontispiece. The figure's body in *Breton Bathers* appears confined by the margins of the composition; she stoops slightly, and her head touches the top framing line. An amorphous black mass—simultaneously rocks and sea—frames the figure; discarded clogs lie on the sand in the foreground. She has apparently thrown off her *coiffe* and a striped apron. In the distance are waves, and in the upper left a tiny, barely discernable, second bather frolics in the surf.

The central figure in the zincograph was derived from the painting *Two Women Bathing (Deux Baigneuses)* (W. 2002, 241) (figure 2.33). Probably begun in Paris during the fall of 1886 following his first stay in Pont Aven, and completed in 1887 after his

return to France from Martinique, the painting marked Gauguin's transition away from Impressionism toward Synthetism. The small, vibrant brushstrokes in the landscape recall the influence of Pissarro, while the large-scale bather and the vertical line of the tree that separates the two halves of the composition foreshadow the importance that Degas and Japanese prints were to have in Gauguin's subsequent work.

In Gauguin's painting of Breton bathers, a nude female figure stands on a grassy bank before stepping into a shallow pool, momentarily resting a hand on a pile of rocks for balance. Meanwhile, her companion in the lower left corner of the composition is already wading in the water, reaching up to attend to her hair. The background is taken up by a view up a steep, grassy hillside.

The artistic development between Gauguin's execution of the painting in 1886-7 and the zincograph in the winter of 1889 is vast. In the painting, the recession of space is gradual, and there are clear distinctions made between the surface textures of the water, rocks and grass. In the graphic version, there is virtually no transition between the fore- and background. In a daring gesture, Gauguin cropped the bather's feet at the ankle and eliminated the sense of solid ground. Like the other prints in the suite directly based on paintings, the graphic version is bolder, the space flatter and more arbitrary, the figure more monumental, and the anecdotal quality of the painting undermined. The smoky black mass surrounding the bather is one of the most remarkable innovations that Gauguin made in the graphic version of the composition. The form simultaneously suggests Brittany's famous black rocks covered with mussels and the sea. The form acts as a foil for the pale figure of the bather and creates physical and psychological distance between the fore- and background figures.

It has been noted that both the nudes and the arrangement of the tree which vertically bisect the painting *Two Women Bathing* owe a debt to Degas' pastels.[39] Degas showed a series of ten pastels of bathers at the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition of 1886, which Gauguin would have seen, and in February 1888 Degas showed another series of pastels of nudes at the Gallery Boussod et Valadon, managed by Theo van Gogh. Gauguin attended the exhibition of 1888, and made studies of several pastels. The attitude of the second bather in Gauguin's painting is especially reminiscent of Degas' red-haired bathers in domestic interiors.

Comparing the *Volpini Suite,* and particularly *Breton Bathers*, with Degas' monotypes sheds new light on the portfolio. Throughout the 1880s, Degas worked on a series of nudes done in monotype in the "dark field manner," that is, by covering the plate entirely with ink and wiping some of it away to create a design. The monotypes are among Degas' most mysterious, evocative works. His bathers are located in dark, claustrophobic interiors, the effect of which is emphasized by a black background. In these works, Degas defined light in extremes of bright highlights and the blackest shadows; middle values were almost non-existent. The figures' large bodies fill the compositions. Rendered with a minimum of anatomical detail and a lack of modeling, their limbs are essentially smooth, cylindrical forms.[40]

Although Degas did not exhibit the monotypes in his lifetime, Gauguin could have seen them in Degas' studio; several prints in the *Volpini Suite* seem to hint at his

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[39] Françoise Cachin, "Degas and Gauguin," in Anne Dumas, *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of New York, 1998), 231.

[40] Eugenia Parry Janis, *Degas Monotypes* (Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, 1968), xxiii.

familiarity with Degas' experiments in the medium. The figure in *Breton Bathers* is as monumental as Degas' bathers, her musculature as undefined. The strong contrasts of inky black with the intense, almost vibrating canary yellow of the paper recall the kind of dramatic opposition of light and dark that Degas achieved in his monotypes. In Gauguin's black shape of rocks and sea, he seems intentionally to imitate the slightly blurred way that oil-based ink would print in a monotype. An artist who enjoyed experimenting and manipulating materials in unconventional ways, Gauguin would have delighted in making lithographs that resembled monotypes, and he may have felt that imitating the look of unique prints gave his lithographs additional caché.

In the process of revising the painting *Two Women Bathing* and translating it into a graphic format, Gauguin took a significant step forward in his artistic development. The complete revision of the second bather in the lithograph reveals the extent to which the entire character of the image has changed. The introduction of the woman in the waves introduces a motif that was to engross Gauguin for the remainder of his career. The red-haired figure in *Two Women Bathing* wades in the shallow water in a pose reminiscent of Degas' bathers of the 1880s. In the zincograph, however, the background bather dives among the waves that stretch beyond the confines of the image. The wading pool has been transformed into an ocean, and the bather into a water nymph.

The two bathers in *Breton Bathers* have been interpreted as Gauguin's attempt to typify the emotional conflict of puberty; the gaunt, boyish body of the foreground bather who symbolizes "acquired morality" is contrasted with the long-haired, round-figured body of the background figure who represents "natural sexuality."[41] The notion of natural

[41] Vojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski, *Paul Gauguin in the Context of Symbolism* (New York; London, Garland Publishing, 1978), 171.

instinct in conflict with society's mores—one of the themes alluded to throughout the *Volpini Suite*—is especially manifest in the Martinique and the Arles images, as I will argue. Water is, of course, a traditional symbol of sexuality; the figure who embraces the sea, therefore may be understood as embracing her own sexuality. Rather than articulating the internal conflict of female puberty however, I would rather suggest that the contrast between two figures, one in and one out of the water may also describe Gauguin's vision of a repressive modern French society versus his idealization of an exotic, non-Western society whose attitude toward sexuality allowed greater freedom. Gauguin's fantasy of the exotic Tahitian woman who has the freedom to embrace her natural sexuality has its roots earlier, in *Breton Bathers*.

Upon leaving Paris and returning to Brittany in the spring 1889, Gauguin painted several canvases that he managed to finish in time to have included in the exhibition at Volpini's Café des beaux-arts. Among the paintings that he worked on after arriving in Le Pouldu were two canvases of exactly the same dimensions, *Life and Death* (W. 1964, 335*)* (figure 2.34) and *In the Waves (Ondine)* (W. 1964, 336) (figure 2.35). Pictures charged with multiple meanings, they mark a crucial moment in his development as an artist.[42] The pair of paintings has been interpreted as a kind of symbolist diptych, the red haired, snub-nosed woman who throws herself into the sea in *In the Waves* may be understood as signifying procreation and renewed vitality, and the two nudes of *Life and Death* as illustrating Synthetist ideas about life and death as related to the temptation and fall of the Biblical Eve.[43]

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[42] Brettel et. al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, 146.

[43] Ibid., 147.

The combination of the two bathers in Gauguin's zincograph *Breton Bathers* prefigures the bather of *In the Waves*. The pose of the primary figure with her back to the viewer foreshadows the pose of the figure in *In the Waves*. The nude back of the figure in the print, accentuated by the brilliant yellow of the paper and framed against the black, smoky black form behind her, is similar to the effect achieved by the contrast of pale flesh tones against the vivid green sea created in the painting *In the Waves*. Furthermore, the abandon with which the background figure in the zincograph swims among the waves foreshadows the way in which the nude in *In the Waves* loses herself in the sea. In translating the subject of two bathers into a zincograph, Gauguin simultaneously moved toward a simplified language of forms and a more complex language of symbol in which the boundaries between figure and nature were intentionally blurred. While the graphic medium necessitated the simplification of form, *In the Waves*, made just months after the creation of the *Volpini Suite*, carries the process of simplification further.

Gauguin's obsession with the motif of a woman breasting the waves is evident in several works on paper dating from 1889, such as a pastel of a woman's head and shoulders against green waves, as well as a fan-shaped composition similar to *In the Waves*. His preoccupation with the theme is clear in the drawing, *At the Black Rocks (Aux Roches noirs)* (figure 2.26) which was reproduced on the frontispiece of the Volpini exhibition catalogue. The drawing conflates *Life and Death* and *In the Waves*; a mournful Eve framed by an amorphous black form is contrasted with the bather at one with the

rhythms of the waves. It is significant that Gauguin chose to announce himself and the exhibition on the catalogue's frontispiece with this contrasting pair of figures.[44]

Gauguin continued to juxtapose the two bathers after departing for the South Seas; *By the Sea* (*Près de la mer*) 1892 (W. 1964, 463) (figure 2.37) was painted on his first Tahitian sojourn. Flat masses of color predominate as they did in *Breton Bathers* and *In the Waves*, and on this occasion, both bathers are depicted from the back. The bathers are as little modeled as is the figure in the zincograph. The foreground figure in *By the Sea* unwraps her garments and approaches the sea; her companion throws herself into it. In this painting, as in the zincograph *Breton Bathers*, an amorphous black form is incorporated into the design. Here the form signifies the branch of a tree, which acts as a barrier between the viewer and the paradisiacal realm beyond.

Years later, on what was to be his final trip to the South Seas, Gauguin returned to the drawing *The Black Rocks*, rendering the composition in a woodcut by the same title in 1889-99. Le Pouldu, his Breton Eve, and the bather in the waves clearly still held meaning for the artist.

It has been suggested that Gauguin's integration of the human form into nature in *Breton Bathers* signifies a restoration of innocence through the immersion of the nude body in the waves.[45] *In the Waves (Ondine)* and the zincograph *Bathers in Brittany* may be read as allegories of physical and spiritual liberation and simultaneously as a warning

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[44] The same pair of bathers hover in the background above the head of Meyer de Haan in the painting *Nirvana: Portrait of Meyer de Haan (Nirvana: Portrait de Meyer de Haan),* 1889 (W. 1964, 320). The bather reappears as the central figure in the polychrome woodcarving, *Be Mysterious (Soyez mystérieuses)*, 1890 (G. 87).

[45] Conrad, "Technique as Stimulus for the Artist's Imagination—Gauguin's Print Oeuvre," in Becker, *Paul Gauguin: Tahiti*, 109.

of the seas and of love's dangers. The potential for dual, opposing readings in these images is in keeping with the pair of prints that utilize the landscape of Le Pouldu as their setting, *Dramas of the Sea*. These images—the only two in the series designed as a pair—also concern duality. One image is active, one passive. One narrative centers around a male figure, the other focuses on a cluster of women. One concerns a solitary struggle, the other communal prayer. One drama is set on land, the other on the sea. The compositions mirror each other in their fan-shaped formats, one traditional in its orientation, the other an inverted fan. In some ways, they are two halves of a whole, each communicating half of a story, each a foil for the other. Whereas the other images in the suite relate either closely or loosely to previous paintings, the two prints titled *Dramas of the Sea* are entirely original compositions.

In *Dramas of the Sea*, a black, churning sea is depicted in the shape of an inverted fan. A small, terrified figure clutches the side of his boat while a dark wave looms over him. The sea is a sublime force rendering the figure tiny and insignificant. At the crest of the composition in the distance is a ship on a calmer sea, but it seems too far away to offer solace. Much of the composition is occupied by a completely abstract pattern of lavis evocative of water. A dark wave shaped like a gargantuan, grasping hand threatens to grip the bow of the fishing boat. The figure's tiny hand which grasps the hull appears tiny and insignificant in the face of nature and of death. A hand-colored version of the print exists, now in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (figure 2.38). Touches of blue brighten the sea above the calm sea that hovers above the whirlpool, while the boat is colored in red, suggestive of death that threatens to overtake the fisherman.

The strange composition has been linked to the short story, "Descent into the Maelström," written by Edgar Allan Poe in 1841 and translated into French by Charles Baudelaire in 1856.[46] In Poe's narrative, a fisherman from the Lofoden Islands off the northwest coast of Norway is swept into an enormous whirlpool and confronts almost certain death. After moving through stages of psychological terror, to awe, "unnatural curiosity" and "strange interest," he is miraculously saved, partly by chance and partly by his own wits and uncanny understanding of natural forces. The story is one of salvation through terror, and Poe's hero is frightened into brilliance; through his experience he achieves an almost poetic communion with the sea. The story can also be interpreted as an allegory of the creation of art. In Gauguin's image, the sea is characterized as potential destroyer and redeemer, in keeping with the artist's description of it in *Breton Bathers*. Here too, the sea can offer spiritual purification, erotic liberation, or simultaneously, death and destruction.

Gauguin's inverted fan-shaped image has been interpreted as quoting from the ukiyo-e woodcut *The Seaweed Gatherer*, by Utagawa Sadahide ca. 1850 (figure 2.39).[47] Gauguin's image of harrowing fear is a literal and figurative inversion of the light-hearted Impressionist format of a fan. Gauguin painted numerous fans, and his work from the mid-1880s onward is enormously influenced by Japanese prints. His penchant for reinterpreting the fan format for images darker and more complex than those of Impressionism may also be seen in the fan-shaped pastel and gouache version of *Ondine*,

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[46] Edgar Allan Poe, *Histoires extraordinaires*, trans. Charles Baudelaire (Paris: M. Lévy, 1856).

[47] Colta Feller Ives, *The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), 102-103.

1889 (figure 2.40). Gauguin would have enjoyed the irony of revising an image of a Japanese seaweed gatherer into an image of Le Pouldu, where seaweed gathering was one of the mainstays of the seafaring population.

An allusion to Edgar Allan Poe can be found in one of Gauguin's letters to Bernard written in the autumn of 1888 from Arles. Gauguin warned Bernard against a slavishly realistic description of nature in painting, instead encouraging the subordination of representation in favor of artistic freedom.

> You discuss shadows with Laval and ask me if I am in accord. So far as regards the analysis of light, yes, Look at the Japanese who are certainly excellent draftsmen, and you will see life depicted in the open air and in the sunshine without shadows, color being used only as a combination of tones, diverse harmonies, giving the impression of warmth, etc…I would avoid as much as possible that which gives the illusion of a thing, and as shadow is the *trompe l'oeil* of the sun, I am constrained to suppress it. If shadows come into your composition as a necessary formula, it is quite another matter. Thus instead of a shape you would get only the shadow of a person; it is an original point of departure, the strangeness of which you will have to take into account. Like the raven on the head of Pallas who sits there rather than a parrot owing to the choice of the artist—a deliberate choice. So then, my dear Bernard, put in shadows if you consider them useful; or keep them out: it comes to the same thing, provided you decline to be enslaved by shadows.[48]

Gauguin used the example of the raven sitting on the bust of Athena from Poe's *Raven* to emphasize the importance of artistic license to the creative artist in contrast to the artist who copies nature like a parrot. Gauguin echoed Poe's own explanation of the composition of a poem in "The Philosophy of Composition:"

> The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore"…the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non*-reasoning creature capable of speech; and,

[48] Gauguin to Bernard, Arles, November 1888, Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends*, ed. Malingue, 112.

> very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*.[49]

Gauguin's off-hand mention of the parrot suggests that both he and Bernard were familiar with Poe's essay. Gauguin used the literary parallel of Poe as a means of emphasizing the artist's choice and his calculation of the effects he wishes to achieve.

It is likely that Gauguin also had in mind Manet's illustrations to the *Raven*, particularly the lithographic illustration that accompanied the passage "And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor/Shall be lifted nevermore!" Here, Manet used the elongated shadow in a highly calculated, "strange" manner, stressing the haunting presence of the bird. Gauguin attempted to incorporate a related strangeness into his work. Curiously, in his etched portrait of Stephané Mallarmé, Gauguin included a raven beside the figure's head, referring to the Symbolist poet's appreciation and translation of Poe. It is interesting that Gauguin found Poe such a significant influence on his ideology that he chose to include his most direct literary reference to Poe in the *Volpini Suite*, which after all, acts as a resumé of Gauguin's work, and is a kind of visual manifesto of his personal aesthetic.

The companion to the dramatic whirlpool image, *Dramas of the Sea: Brittany*, depicts three women praying out-of-doors, presumably for the safe return of local fishermen. This image of simple piety is contrasted with the tumult of the maelstrom image, and yet the tranquility of the prayer is undermined by the plunge of the precipice

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[49] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," in *Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1984), 18.

in the background giving way to a view of a black, churning sea. The women's calm downcast eyes contrast sharply with the surging waters below.

Even this seemingly simple image encompasses the notion of dualism. Gauguin incorporates two points of view: the figures are seen from a slightly above, while the sea is depicted from an overhead, bird's eye view. This way of depicting the sea is similar to Gauguin's treatment of it in the whirlpool image and in *Breton Bathers.* In each image, Gauguin makes virtually no attempt to render perspective. The sea is a flat pattern of decorative swirls juxtaposed with inky-black, amorphous forms. In the hand-colored version of the print, now in the collection of the Albright-Knox Gallery, Gauguin once again contrasted warm and cool colors (figure 2.41). The grassy cliff's edge and the swirling sea below are green, while the haystacks are orange. As in *Bretons by a Fence*, the women's *coiffes* are colored with white gouache.

In this pair of zincographs, Gauguin experimented with ambiguity of form in a way he did not in his contemporary paintings. After the making of the suite, however, there is an increasing presence of flat, decorative color and of amorphous forms that may be read in a variety of ways. Such works following the *Volpini Suite* further define and implement the Synthetist aesthetic in his work.

**Arles: *Human Misery, Washerwomen,* and *Old Women of Arles***

*Human Misery* (figure 2.42)*, Washerwomen* (figure 2.43), and *Old Women of Arles* (figure 2.44) derive from paintings Gauguin worked on in Arles, just weeks before he made the *Volpini Suite*. The paintings were among his most advanced, sophisticated compositions of 1888, combining flat passages of color and a complex program of

personal symbolism. In translating these paintings into another media, Gauguin pared the compositions down to their essentials while retaining the mystery of the original canvases. Through the ingenuity and daring of his designs, he succeeds in augmenting the haunting atmosphere of the compositions within a limited palette of black or brown ink on vibrant yellow backgrounds.

In the zincograph *Human Misery*, a melancholy female figure is seated in a simple landscape with her chin resting on her hands. She glances up at a male figure that bears a curious resemblance to a younger Gauguin. The surrounding landscape is summarized by a stylized, curving tree that arches over the figures. A wooden fence and stone wall form a decorative border at the top of the image. On the other side of the stone wall, a figure peers at the young couple. The dramatic cropping of the tree and the fence and the wide expanse of empty space behind the figures is influenced by Japanese prints.

Gauguin loosely based the print on *Human Misery (Misère Humaines),* 1888 (W. 2002, 317) (figure 2.45), painted in Arles. Little concerned with geographical exactitude, the artist conflated Breton and Arlesian motifs in the composition.[50] He described the painting in a letter to Bernard:

> Purple vines forming triangles against an upper area of chrome yellow. On the left, a Breton woman of Le Pouldu in black with a gray apron. Two Breton women bending over in light blue-green dresses with black bodices. In the foreground, a beggar girl with orange-colored hair and a white blouse and greenish-white skirt…It is an impression of vineyards that I saw in Arles. I put in some Bretons—so much for exactitude. It is the best canvas I've done this year.[51]

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[50] Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his Circle in Brittany*, 51.

[51] Gauguin to Bernard, Arles, November 1888, Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin*, ed. Merlhès, 275. "Des vignes pourpres formant triangles sur le haut jaune de chrome. A gauche Bretonne du Pouldu noir tablier gris. Deux Bretonnes baissées à robes bleu vert clair et corsage noir. Au premier plan terrain rose et pauvresse en cheveux orange chemise blanche et jupe terre verte avec du blanc…C'est un effect de vignes que j'ai vu à Arles. J'y ai mis des Bretonnes—tant pis pour l'exactitude. C'est ma meilleure toile de cette année."

The painting was inspired by a walk that Gauguin took with van Gogh shortly after his arrival in Arles. Van Gogh described the outing in a letter to Theo dated 4 November 1888, "Sunday, if you'd been with us, we saw a red vineyard, all red like red wine. In the distance it turned to yellow, and then a green sky with the sun, the earth after the rain violet, sparkling yellow here and there where it caught the reflection of the setting sun."[52] Van Gogh's rendition of the subject, *Red Vineyard* (F495), depicts female figures toiling in a red field lit by a brilliant yellow sky. Gauguin's anti-naturalist, vivid colors describe the inner state of being of the melancholy figure seated in the foreground of a red and gold vineyard. The differences in the two paintings typify the two artists' disagreements regarding painting from nature in a more literal way, versus painting from memory. Gauguin used color expressively and symbolically in *Human Misery*; the central figure's orange hair, white-blue blouse and pale green shirt contrast dramatically with the costume of her black-cloaked companion who stands beside her on what appears to be a rock-strewn path. The landscape has been abbreviated to bands of white, red, and gold. Two anonymous figures bend over their work in the background. The costumes and colors differentiate the women; the brooding thinker is likened to the landscape by her vivid coloring. She is likened to nature, and her loose hair and dishabille suggest sensuality and transgression, while the black-clad figures are anonymous, rigid in their poses, controlled by societal demands.

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[52] Vincent to Theo van Gogh, undated [November 1888] (letter 559), Van Gogh, *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, 101.

Interpretations of the subject have varied, but most agree that the seated melancholy figure refers, at least on some level, to the notion of the fallen woman.[53] Although the title *Misères humaines* was used when the painting was exhibited at the Exposition des XX in Brussels in February of 1889 and at the Volpini exhibition the following summer, Gauguin also referred to the painting in a sketchbook of 1888-90 as *Splendeur et misère*, taken from the title of Balzac's novel, *Splendeur et misère des courtisanes*, 1845. [54] Although not necessarily a comment on the woman's profession, the figure's loose hair, white shift and sullen demeanor suggest the loss of sexual innocence.

Apart from the title and the pose of the central figure, little remains of Gauguin's painted composition in the zincograph. Whereas the overriding atmosphere of the painting is of melancholy, the mood of the print evolved into something more sinister. The central figure is no longer shadowed by industrious Arlésiennes occupied with harvesting grapes. Instead, a black-cloaked figure, identified by Henri Dorra as a priest, is relegated to the margins of the image, on the far side of a stone fence, peeking through the branches of a tree.[55] The figure's presence more menacing than reassuring, is emblematic of Christian conscience, societal censure, and village opinion.[56] Furthermore, in the print, the central figure is accompanied by a young man whose gaze appears

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[53] The melancholy figure and the subject of *Human Misery* have been the subject of numerous articles, including Wayne V. Andersen, "Gauguin and a Peruvian Mummy," *The Burlington Magazine* (April 1967): 238-242; Henri Dorra, "Gauguin's Unsympathetic Observers," *Gazette des beaux-arts* (Dec. 1970): 367-372; Ziva Amishai-Marsels, "Gauguin's 'Philosophical Eve,'" *The Burlington Magazine* (June 1973): 373-382; Henri Dorra, "Gauguin's Dramatic Arles Themes," *Art Journal* (Fall 1978): 12-17.

[54] Wildenstein, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 514.

[55] Dorra, "Gauguin's Unsympathetic Observers," 368.

[56] Dorra, "Gauguin's Dramatic Arles Themes," 14.

surreptitious and furtive. One can only assume that the couple's relationship is the cause of the central figure's grief, and the spying glance of the background figure suggests the forbidden character of their interaction. The pair and their psychological distress literally loom large in the print; they are monumental and pushed into the foreground of the composition's space.

Gauguin used a dark brick-red or sanguine ink to print *Human Misery*. The juxtaposition of brick-red ink on yellow paper invokes the spectacle of the red-tinged vines in the golden glow of the sunset in his painting. A hand-colored impression of the print is now in a private collection (figure 2.46). The female figure's blouse is touched with white gouache, and her skirt is a translucent blue that allows the texture of the lavis to show through. The fore- and middle-ground are only lightly touched with watercolor and retain the vibrant yellow of the paper. It is interesting to note that while in the painting the melancholy thinker had red-orange flowing hair, in the hand-colored impression of the zincograph, the male figure's hair is colored vibrant orange. Red hair has long been associated with wanton sexuality, and Gauguin's association of it with the male figure may allude to the couple's supposed position on the outskirts of society.

The Impressionist and Post-Impressionist debt to Japanese color woodcuts has been the subject of numerous studies of nineteenth century French art.[57] Like many artists of the period, Gauguin collected ukiyo-e. They were part of the archive of visual material

[57] For example, see Colta Ives, *The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974); and Gabriel Weisberg et. al., *Japonsime: Japanese Influence on French Art 1854-1910* (The Cleveland Museum of Art, the Rutgers University Art Gallery and the Walters Art Gallery, 1975); Frank Whitford, *Japanese Prints and Western Painters* (London: Cassell & Collier Macmillan Publishers, Ltd., 1977); Mutual Influences between Japanese and Occidental Arts Symposium et. al., *Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium* (Tokyo: Committee of the Year 2001, 1980).

from which he drew inspiration, decorating the walls of his studios and accompanying him on his travels. Gauguin could have been exposed to Japanese prints in Degas' studio or in any number of private collections in Paris. Furthermore, during his visit to van Gogh in the south of France, he would have seen examples from Vincent's collection of Japanese woodcuts.[58] It is understandable therefore, that the influence of Japanese prints would be strong in the *Volpini Suite*, and it was manifested most definitively in the three Arles subjects.

Influenced by compositions in Japanese prints, in the late 1880s Gauguin began separating two parts of his compositions with curving trees, as he does in the zincograph *Human Misery*. The curving tree is used not only to separate planes of action, but also to divide diverse psychological states. The brooding girl and her lover occupy their own internal world, while the area on the other side of the tree represents the outside world**.** A similar tree separates the parishioners from their vision in his Pont-Aven painting, *Vision of the Sermon,* 1888. Such a dividing device was derived from Japanese prints in which near and far distances or public and private realms are kept separate by trees, bridges, or other dividing compositional devices.

In *Washerwomen*, two faceless figures wash clothes at the water's edge. The figures are heavy, almost monolithic, their bodies lumpy masses, hidden beneath voluminous skirts and shawls. They communicate neither with the viewer nor each other. In my opinion, their monumentality evokes the massive standing stones of Carnac, remnants of Brittany's pagan past. Indeed, the gravity surrounding the figures' activity

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[58] Charlotte van Rappard-Boon, *Catalogue of the Van Gogh Museum's Collection of Japanese Prints* (Amsterdam; Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum; Waanders Publishers, 1991).

suggests a ceremonial atmosphere, as though the two women are performing a religious ritual; the figure toiling over a washboard seems bent in prayer. The cropping of the figures is radical; legs are omitted, and a cow is truncated at the shoulders. The absence of sky or horizon undermines perspective and emphasizes the monumentality of the figures and the compression of space. The women are on the verge of being subsumed by the surrounding pool; the bending figure's hands literally dissolve into an abstract, watery mass.

The recession of space is difficult to discern in this image. A bank of grass seems to separate the viewer from the laundresses, and the river forms an amorphous mass that occupies the entire background of the composition. It is nearly impossible to decipher one element from another throughout this abstract background of swirls and texture. A hand-colored impression of the print in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, provides a few clues as to the terrain (figure 2.47). The swells of the grassy bank in the foreground are outlined in green, and the pooling water at the right is colored in blue with touches of white. Behind the standing figure is a passage of pink, suggesting an expanse of sand. This warm area echoes the brilliant red passage that frames the standing figure in the painting upon which the print is based, *Laundresses of Arles (Les Lavandières)* (W. 2002, 325) (figure 2.48) executed in Arles in December 1888, one of two paintings of washerwomen that Gauguin painted during that period. Despite the obvious link to an Arles canvas, its locale has been a subject of disagreement among scholars. Boyle-Turner connects the scene to Pont-Aven, while Wildenstein confirms the locale as Arles.[59] That

[59] Boyle-Turner argues that the scene refers to women washing laundry along the edge of the Aven River. She explains that each house bordering this river had a designated washing place where women congregated to work and socialize. While there were also large, communal wash

elements of both locales are present in the composition emphasizes that Gauguin's primary concern was conveying on mood and style rather than a specific locale.

*Old Women of Arles* depicts a procession of four female figures through a garden. Abbreviated forms of wrapped trees and a curving path suggest a winter landscape. The print is an adaptation of the painting *Arlésiennes, Mistral* or *Public Garden, Arles (Arlésiennes, Mistral* or *Jardin public, Arles)* (W. 2002, 329) (figure 2.49) executed in mid-December 1888, one of the last paintings Gauguin executed in Arles. The women of Arles were famous for their beauty and were easily identifiable by their traditional, elegant hairstyles and abundant shawls. In the same way that he admired Breton women and their traditional costumes, Gauguin was initially attracted to the Arlésiennes; they reminded him of figures in procession on antique Greek red and black vases. This association of the classical and the contemporary seemed to suggest to Gauguin at the beginning of his stay in Arles that his surroundings would offer the resources with which he would pioneer what he described as a "beautiful *modern* style."[60]

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areas along the river, much of the work seems to have been done in smaller groups behind each house. She points out that the Aven River is shallow in parts, rocky and full of eddies and swirls in others, just as Gauguin depicts in the paintings and in the zincograph. In addition, the women appear in typical Pont-Aven clothes; the kneeling woman wears a "coiffe de travail," while the standing woman wears either a "coiffe de basin," or a mourning coiffe. Their shawls are typical of a kind worn in Pont Aven, and the wooden washboard is also typical of the area. Caroline Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School*, 51-52. Wildenstein, however, suggests that the scene is the *lavoir*, or washing-place, some 400 metres from van Gogh's yellow house. He suggests that van Gogh led Gauguin to the canal, having already painted several scenes of laundresses in Arles himself. He acknowledges, however, that the coiffe and cow are more reminiscent of Brittany than of Provence. Wildenstein*, Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, 534. Colta Ives points out that the goat's presence in the composition suggests the scene is more evocative of Brittany than Arles, where goats are not common.

[60] Gauguin to Bernard, late October or beginning of November 1888, (letter 176), Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin*, ed. Merlhès, 270. "En tout cas il y a ici une source de beau style moderne."

Gauguin's canvas was a direct response to Vincent's painting, *Memory of the Garden (Etten and Nuenen)*, 1888 (F. 496) (figure 2.50), a painting of the latter's mother and sister Wil in a landscape, which Vincent painted from memory, or *de tête*, following Gauguin's encouragement. Vincent himself disliked the picture and chose not to sign it. Gauguin's *Arlésiennes, Mistral* and *Memory of the Garden* contain women walking along a curving garden path which tilts up to the picture plane. Whereas Vincent's picture evokes a spring garden, Gauguin's is chilled and somber. The woman in the foreground of *Arlésiennes* resembles Madame Ginoux, whom both Vincent and Gauguin painted in Arles. She draws a shawl around her face for protection from the cold. The procession of darkly clad figures following her along the walkway recalls Gauguin's initial enthusiasm for the Arlésiennes, but the cortege here is funereal.

With the omission of details such as the fence and the fountain, Gauguin's zincograph of the same subject is simplified, the space flatter and even less certain than the painted version of the theme. While the painting shimmers with brilliant juxtapositions of red, green, yellow, and blue, the zincograph, restricted to yellow and black, has a more somber mood. In an extreme departure from the Impressionist ideal of women in sunlit gardens, Gauguin presents a dark vision of a winter garden, the figures drawing black cloaks around them in the cold atmosphere. Even the trees are covered with straw-matting as protection against the cold, and the foreground shrub, rendered with quick, sharp touches of lithographic ink, seems to bristle uninvitingly. Pushed closer to the foreground, the wrapped trees become more prominent in the graphic version of the composition.

The most lyrical note in the zincograph is provided by the swaying branches of the willow tree in the upper right of the composition. Made with light touches of lithographic ink, the willow moves with the wind, and two branches trail outside of the border surrounding the image. In the painting, the willow tree is suggested by delicate touches of red pigment along wispy branches. Gauguin ingeniously translates this detail into strokes of lithographic crayon that break the confines of the image. The willow branches relate this image to *Joys of Brittany* in which two small dogs—companions to the dancing girls—have run beyond the border of the image. But the effect is different here. The figures in *Old Women of Arles* are confined within their cloaks, within the margins, within society. There is the sense of the inescapable which only the willow tree overcomes.

The prevailing atmosphere in the three Arles images is one of loss. Unfulfilled or thwarted sexuality, loss of identity, loss of the self in the landscape, toil and death are the pervasive themes in these works. The atmosphere of all three images is claustrophobic; none include a sky or horizon. All three zincographs are derived from paintings made just weeks before Gauguin returned to Paris and made the *Volpini Suite.* In the monumental forms of the figures and the simplification and abstraction of the background, they are among his most Synthetist works in the suite. In these three prints, we find a manifestation of the artistic ideals that Gauguin was debating with Vincent van Gogh and Bernard in 1888. The prints put into practice Gauguin's dictum, "It is better to paint from memory, for thus your work will be your own."[61]

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[61] During the 1880s, Gauguin carried a so-called Turkish manual in his pocket, occasionally showing it to friends. Although the source of the text has not been identified, it may have been a translation of a passage concerning the distribution of hues in the making of Oriental carpets. Gauguin was attracted to it for its insistence on luminosity of colors, working from memory, and

**Conclusion**

Numerous themes are played out among the eleven images that comprise the *Volpini Suite*.[62] The idea of duality in the three images of Le Pouldu seems to me typical of the series in which each image is a foil for another. For the figures in *Breton Bathers,* the sea presents an opportunity for spiritual purification and sensual liberation, if one has the courage to enter it. On the other hand, for the fisherman caught in the whirlpool, danger exists alongside the potential for direct communion with the sublime. The praying figures in *The Dramas of the Sea* remind us of the presence of religious faith in Brittany and of Gauguin's interest in it, and of its implied presence throughout the series. The Arles compositions are in direct contrast with the Martinique pair. *Human Misery*, *Washerwomen*, and *Old Women of Arles* concern shame, sexuality, loss of the self, the burden of societal expectations, Celtic history and myth, toil, starkness, winter and deprivation. *Martinique Pastoral* and *Cicadas and Ants* conversely, are images of a fertile, tropical paradise. In these compositions the figures are young, exotic, and

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the use of static and silhouetted poses. Gauguin's hand-copied version of the text is in the Bibliothèque nationale, Département des manuscrits. He recopied the passage in *Avant et après*; Gauguin, *Intimate Journals*, 71.

[62] There have been several suggestions as to the overall themes of the *Volpini Suite*. Welsch-Ovcharov identified "terrors of the sea" as the central motif of the portfolio; Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism*, 196. Phillip Dennis Cate suggested that in his images of Arles, Martinique and Brittany, Gauguin's interest was in describing people whom he understood as "essentially human" in their combination of innocence and psychological complexity. Cate sees several of the plates as attempts to suggest, but not to explain, primitive mysteries, hidden truths and primal fears through the use of simplified shapes and by ignoring traditional Western perspective in favor of two-dimensional abstraction found in medieval and Japanese art; Phillip Dennis Cate, ed., *The Graphic Arts and French Society, 1871-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1988), 114. Richard Brettell sees the reversed inscription on the cover "Shame on Those who Evil Think" as indicative of the moral ambiguity that he finds pervasive in the series; Brettel et. al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, 132.

feminine, the landscape is fecund, inviting, and tranquil. The promise of the frontispiece with its conglomeration of classical, Christian, and Breton motifs, is fulfilled by the suite, which is not a series in the traditional sense, but rather a resumé of the diverse locales that characterized Gauguin's early career. A true series would have necessitated a sustained reflection on a single theme, such as Edouard Manet's *The Raven*, 1875, Emile Bernard's *Les Bretonneries*, 1889, Mary Cassatt's famous series of ten color aquatints of 1890-91, or Toulouse-Lautrec's portfolio *Elles*, 1899. Instead, Gauguin chose to make his career the subject of the *Volpini Suite*, to portray himself as an avant-garde artist, as a leader of a group of disciples, forging the way toward a new aesthetic. The prints are simultaneously a work of art, autobiography, and manifesto. The *Volpini Suite* enumerates each of Gauguin's thematic concerns, juxtaposing their conflicts, and advertising his artistic ability.

Various authors have identified Gauguin's greatest innovation as the thematic inter-relatedness of his work across various media, or differently stated, the facility with which he recycled motifs, reusing them in different contexts and media.[63] An examination of the *Volpini Suite* highlights his process of using a motif in one medium—a painting for example—and then modifying that motif, and adapting it to another medium—such as ceramic—and then adapting it once again to incorporate it into a print.

Gauguin's process of repetition, re-presentation, revision of painted motifs into graphic form is related to the way that he borrowed techniques and materials from one medium for use in another, blurring the boundaries between the visual effects of painting, woodcarving, drawing, watercolor, pastel and printmaking in a way that presaged the art

[63] Carol Christensen, "The Painting Techniques of Paul Gauguin," in Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellows; National Gallery of Art, *Conservation Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1993), 94.

of the twentieth century. The borrowing of motifs and technical effects is one of the guiding principles of the *Volpini Suite*. In the series, Gauguin borrowed themes from his paintings, drawings, and ceramics. Similarly, the effects created by the zincographs, with their vast array of textures, sometimes imitate monotypes, and even the vivid palette of his paintings. In creating the series, Gauguin returned to compositions that he considered his strongest, translating and modifying them to be suitable to a graphic format. *The Joys of Brittany* was derived from one of his most successful images of Pont-Aven, and he considered *Human Misery* the strongest painting he did in Arles. In the Martinique pair he gleaned various elements from the Caribbean paintings, reinterpreting them into new compositions. Even when closely related to a painting, the adjustments in composition that Gauguin made, the simplification of forms, the flattening of space, the decorative use of line, signaled the direction of his subsequent work. The creation of the *Volpini Suite* was prompted by Gauguin's desire to establish himself as the leader of a new school in opposition to the Neo-Impressionists. The goal of the suite was self-advertisement, to provide an audience with an overview of his work, and to establish his reputation as a mature painter and modern master.

**Chapter Three: Gauguin's Yellow Paper**

Gauguin's choice of large sheets of brilliant, canary yellow paper is one of the most remarkable aspects of the *Volpini Suite*. He gave no explanation for the paper, but the sheet size was clearly important; when giving away or selling the portfolio, Gauguin stored the uncut sheets in oversize portfolios, trimming only the cover design and adhering it onto the front marbled board.

The unconventional use of yellow by the avant-garde was not a new phenomenon. In 1883, Whistler titled his exhibition of Venetian etchings at the Fine Art Society in London "Arrangement in Yellow and White." In a letter to the young American sculptor Waldo Story, Whistler described the gallery:

> I can't tell you how perfect it all is—there isn't a detail forgotten—there are yellow *painted* moldings—not *gilded*, yellow velvet curtains—pale yellow matting—yellow sofas and chairs—a lovely little yellow table, of my own design—with a yellow pot and tiger lily! Large white butterflies on yellow curtains—and yellow butterflies on white curtains—and finally a servant in yellow livery (!) handing out catalogues.[1]

At a private viewing, guests received yellow silk butterflies to pin to their clothes and Whistler wore yellow socks. Although the effect was as outrageous as Whistler could have desired, the idea was not entirely original. Lucien Pissarro provided an account of the exhibition to his father, Camille Pissarro, who responded to his son:

> How I regret not to have seen the Whistler show; I would have liked to have been there as much for the fine drypoints as for the setting, which for Whistler has so much importance; he is even a little bit too *pretentious* for me, aside from this I should say that for the room white and yellow is a charming combination. The

[1] Gordon H. Fleming, *James Abbott McNeill Whistler, A Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 228.

> fact is that we ourselves made the first experiments with colors: the room in which I showed was lilac, bordered with canary yellow.[2]

Pissarro was referring to the installation of his works at the First Impressionist Exhibition of 1874.

Several explanations have been posed regarding Gauguin's yellow paper. It has been suggested that the paper reflected his appreciation of Japanese art. A similar vibrant yellow was used in *ukiyo-e* prints, *surimono*, as well as on the covers of Japanese books such as Hokusai's *Manga*, and in French publications of the 1880s on Japanese art.[3] In printing on large sheets of bright, cheaply manufactured paper rather than fine, hand-made papers as selected by artists like Rembrandt or Whistler, Gauguin may also have intended to evoke the appearance of popular posters of the period, such as those produced by Emile Lévy during the 1870s and 1880s which used similar garish yellow papers.[4] Gauguin's use of large sheets suggests that he intended the prints to be viewed without cover mats, so that his design would float on a field of vibrating yellow. Such an effect would also have been more suggestive of posters of the period rather than the rarified *épreuve d'artiste*. It has also been suggested that Vincent Van Gogh was chromatically

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[2] Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, February 28, 1883, Janine Bailly-Herzberg, *Correspondance de Pissarro, 1865-1885,* vols. 1-5 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1980), 1 :177. "Que je regrette de ne pas voir l'exposition de Whistler, tant au point de vue des fines pointes sèches qu'au point de vue de la mise en scène qui, chez Whistler, est d'une grande importance ; il y met même un peu trop de *puffisme* selon moi. A part cela, ce me semble que blanc et jaune doivent être d'un effet charmant ; nous avons en effet les premiers fait ces essais de couleurs ; ma salle était lilas avec bordure jaune serin, sans papillon."

[3] Caroline Boyle Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his Circle in Brittany* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1986), 37.

[4] Douglas W. Druick and Peter Kort Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 393.

referred to in the *Volpini Suite*.[5] Gauguin made the *Volpini Suite* just weeks after his return to Paris after fleeing the Studio of the South in Arles. The work that he made in Arles and immediately afterward underscored the importance that van Gogh played upon his art. In this chapter, I will discuss the variety of influences that played a role in Gauguin's choice of paper.

## *Japonisme* in France

By 1868, there was such a demand for Japanese art in Paris that Jules and Edmond Goncourt recorded the phenomenon with biting sarcasm in their *Journals*:

> We were the first to introduce the taste for Chinese and Japanese objects. Who more than we felt, preached, and propagated this taste, which has now descended to the middle classes? Who fell in love with the first Japanese prints and had the courage to buy them? In our novel, *In the Year 18*— we described a chimney piece covered with Japanese knick-knacks, and on the score of this, one critic, Edmond Texier, insisted that we should be locked up in the lunatic asylum at Charenton, because our taste proved us mad. –1868 [6]

The Parisian appetite for Asian *objets d'art* began in the early decades of the nineteenth century. What was it about the art of Japan that appealed so keenly to the French sensibility, and why did Japan so capture the French artistic imagination in the mid-nineteenth century? Japan's contact with Europe had begun in the sixteenth century, but by enacting a policy of seclusion, the country had managed to restrict its dealings with Europe to business only with the Dutch. Japan was forced to open its doors to the West in 1854, following more than two hundred years of virtual isolation.

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[5] Ibid., 277.

[6] Edmond and Jules Goncourt, *The Goncourt Journals 1851-1870*, trans. Lewis Galantière (New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1958), 263.

Most literature on *Japonisme* argues that, for the West, Japanese culture related closely to the idealized image of medieval Europe, particularly regarding the influence of religion on daily life, the hierarchical social structure, the feudal economic and social structure, and the low level of industrialization, and that Japanese art provided the source of inspiration for the revitalization of European decorative arts. During a lecture given at the first international symposium on Japonisme in Tokyo in 1979, Jean-Paul Bouillon set forth an opposing viewpoint. In his discussion of Félix Bracquemond, a major figure in the history of *Japonisme*, Bouillon argued that some "Japanese" motifs were already present in Bracquemond's work previous to his "discovery" of Japanese prints. Bouillon concluded that rather than providing all the impetus for developments in European art, such as the elimination of perspective and the use of flat areas of color, Japanese art confirmed and reinforced trends that had already begun in European—and particularly French—art.[7] Whether Japanese art was the source of inspiration to the avant-garde, or whether it merely confirmed and encouraged artistic trends that were already in motion, Japanese art became extremely popular in nineteenth-century Paris.[8]

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[7] Jean-Paul Bouillon, "Remarques sur le Japonisme de Bracquemond," in Mutual Influences between Japanese and Occidental Arts Symposium et. al., *Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium* (Tokyo: Committee for the Year 2001, 1980), 85-107.

[8] Among the first shops in Paris to deal in Chinese and Japanese curios was *La Porte chinoise* at 36, rue Vivienne, opened by Bouilliette in 1826, and *La Jonque chinoise* at 220, rue de Rivoli, operated by the husband and wife team, M. and Mme Desoye from 1862. Both stores were frequented by famous figures such as Charles Baudelaire, Edmond de Goncourt, James Abott McNeill Whistler, and the art critics Philippe Burty and William Michael Rossetti. Japan was thoroughly represented at the Exposition Universelle of 1867 in Paris. Decorative objects such as ceramics, lacquer ware, and metalwork were exhibited to great acclaim; their quality, design and manufacture were praised in reviews in numerous respected art journals. Burty coined the term, "*Japonisme*" in an article published in 1872 in the avant-garde journal, *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique*.

From 1878 until after the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, Siegfried Bing (1838-1905) dominated the market for Japanese art in Paris, specializing in bronzes, ceramics and *ukiyo-e* prints.[9] Bing opened his first store on the rue Chauchat in 1878 to coincide with the Exposition Universelle and quickly became a powerful influence in shaping French taste for Japanese collectables. He contributed to the burgeoning appreciation of Japanese art in Paris not only as an art dealer serving collectors and museums, but also in his contributions to exhibitions and publications and with his own private collection from which he loaned frequently. By the mid-1880s, Bing owned several shops in Paris, selling antique and contemporary Japanese art objects. In addition, he formed his own trading company, Bing et Cie.

The Impressionists' discovery of Japanese prints is generally considered to have begun with Félix Bracquemond's discovery of Japanese prints—particularly Hokusai's

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Philippe Sichel, who owned a shop on the rue Pigalle, was among the second generation of French dealers to specialize in Japanese art. He was the first French art dealer to travel to Japan. He did so in 1874, and brought back five thousand objects which he sold to his rapidly expanding group of clients. Sichel published a travel journal, "Notes of a Parisian Art Dealer in Japan" ("Notes d'un bibeloteur au Japon") which recorded the details of his journey, beginning with his arrival in Nagasaki in March 1874 and ending with his return to Marseilles in September of the same year. As Edmond de Goncourt pointed out in his introduction to Sichel's essay, it was the only text that provided information on the art trade in Japan from the perspective of a European dealer.

[9] The Japanese word *ukiyo-e* is made up of two parts: *ukiyo*, meaning "Floating World," and *e*, meaning "pictures." The term is generally translated as "pictures of the Floating World." This translation, however, offers limited understanding to the Western reader. The word ukiyo was originally a Buddhist term referring to the transience of life. In the late seventeenth century, however, *ukiyo-e* began to take on other, more positive connotations. Rather than signifying the Buddhist transient world of sorrows, it came to evoke the transient world of pleasures, particularly those associated with a life of extravagance. The art depicting this world of pleasure and luxury, and those who indulged in it, came to be called "pictures of the Floating World." *Ukiyo-e* does not refer only to color woodcuts, but also to paintings and book illustrations which evidenced this practice of depicting everyday life. Donald Jenkins, *The Floating World Revisted* (Portland: Portland Art Museum, 1993), 4.

*Manga* (*Sketches*)—in the shop of his printer, Eugene Delâtre in 1856.[10] Supposedly, soon afterwards, Japanese prints were exported to Europe in large quantities, frequently used as packing paper for goods being shipped.[11] At any rate, Bracquemond found and bought a copy of Hokusai's book and shared it with his friends the critic, collector and etcher Philippe Burty (1830-1890), the writer and artist Zacharie Astruc (1833-1907), and Manet, and thus began an enthusiasm that endured through the end of the century.[12] Burty became an advocate for the movement that he called "Japonisme."[13]

In 1883, a landmark book was published in the history of *Japonisme*. In his lavish two-volume history of Oriental art, *L'Art japonais*, Louis Gonse praised Japanese prints, and Hokusai in particular, whose *Manga* influenced French artists from Manet to Gauguin.[14] According to Gonse, it was impossible to describe the beauty, harmony, and variety of Hokusai's figures.

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[10] Numerous authors credit this event as the beginning of the influence of *Japonisme* on nineteenth-century French artists, including Colta Feller Ives, *The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese woodcuts on French Prints* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), 12.

[11] Charlotte van Rappard-Boon, Willem van Gulik and Keiko van Bremen-Ito, *Catalogue of the Van Gogh Museum's Collection of Japanese Prints* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum and Waanders Publishers, 1991), 47.

[12] Bracquemond's work was profoundly influenced by *Japonisme*. Within a decade, Bracquemond had designed a complete set of tableware based on motifs from Hokusai and Hiroshige. His *Service japonais* was probably intended for use at dinners shared by the Club Jinglar, a group of artists and critics who, in the 1860s, shared an appreciation for Japanese art. The Club Jinglar was named for a sweet, exotic-tasting wine consumed at their dinners, at which kimonos and chopsticks were preferred to frockcoats and flatware. See Bernard Bumpus, "The Jing-lar and Republican Politics. Drinking, Dining and Japonisme," *Apollo*, 3 (1996): 13-16.

[13] For an analysis of Burty's encouragement of the French taste for *Japonisme*, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Philippe Burty and a Critical Assessment of Early "Japonisme," in Mutual Influences between Japanese and Occidental Arts Symposium et. al., *Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium*, 109-125.

[14] Hayashi Tadamasa (1851-1906), a Japanese art dealer, provided Gonse with invaluable assistance, translating artists' signatures and obtaining documents on Kitagawa Utamaro and

> That which this prodigious man created surpassed the imagination. There does not exist in the history of art another example of parallel fecundity…He created a world in which everything is animated with intense life. His oeuvre is a complete tableau of Japan, a veritable encyclopedia of the expressive and picturesque.[15]

In *Memoirs of an Old Collector of East Asian Art* (*Souvenirs d'un vieil amateur d'art de l'Extrême-Orient)* published in 1930, Raymond Koechlin described the rise in popularity of *ukiyo-e* in France at the end of the nineteenth century and his adventures as an art collector.[16] Among Koechlin's keen observations of the Parisian art market was his description of Hayashi Takamasa as the "great architect of the transformation of the appreciation of Japanese art in Europe."[17] He described Hayashi's and Bing's obtainment of *ukiyo-e* prints from Japan:

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Katsushika Hokusai for Gonse. Hayashi came to Paris for the 1878 Exposition Universelle as a translator and assistant to the dealer Waki Kensaburō. Hayashi remained in Paris, eventually taking over the shop after Wakai's retirement, and became one of the most successful dealers of Japanese art in Paris. In 1900 he was appointed the Commissioner-General for the Japanese selection of the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle upon the condition that he retire as a dealer. Hayashi was an expert in *ukiyo-e* prints with excellent contacts in Japan, and it has been estimated that he imported over 160,000 Japanese woodblock prints to Europe. Clients who purchased *ukiyo-e* prints from Hayashi and Bing—who also extended his business to include Japanese prints—included Vincent van Gogh, Gauguin, Pierre Bonnard, and Toulouse-Lautrec. Gonse acknowledged Hayashi's expertise in *L'Art Japonais*.

[15] Louis Gonse, *L'Art japonais*, vols. 1-2 (Paris: A. Quantin, 1883), 2: 356. "Ce que cet homme prodigieux a créé dépasse toute imagination. Il n'existe pas dans l'histoire de l'art un autre exemple d'une fécondité pareille…Il a créé un monde où tout est animé d'une vie intense. Son oeuvre est un tableau complet du Japon, une véritable encyclopédie expressive et pittoresque."

[16] Raymond Koechlin's (1860-1931) collection included Japanese and Korean ceramics, Japanese lacquers and prints, inrō, Buddhist sculpture, paintings and sword ornaments, Islamic ceramics, Syrian and Egyptian copper ware, Persian miniatures, and early Chinese ceramics and bronzes. His interests also extended to European art, and he collected medieval sculpture as well as paintings, drawings and prints by nineteenth-century French artists such as Camille Corot, Edgar Degas, Eugène Delacroix, Paul Gauguin, Constantin Guys, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, and Vincent van Gogh. Koechlin was also an ardent supporter of Art Nouveau, see Max Put, *Plunder and Pleasure: Japanese Art in the West 1860-1930* (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2000), 39-41.

[17] Ibid., 76.

> As soon as Bing and Hayaski sensed a growing interest in prints, they sent orders to Japan. Their agents scoured book and print dealers, including the smallest of shops, and they secured entrance into private collections. To the amazement of buyers and dealers alike anything that bore a colored impression was gathered together and dispatched to Paris.[18]

He acknowledged that *ukiyo-e* were to have a "positive impact on late nineteenth-century French painting," and that Bing and Hayashi were "zealous propagators of a new cult."[19] According to Koechlin, between 1890 and 1900 there were unparalleled collections of Japanese prints in Paris; "it was the capital of this modest realm."[20]

In response to the enthusiastic reception of Japanese prints in Paris, numerous exhibitions were staged in the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s. At the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle, ceramics, lacquers and print albums were exhibited within a Japanese pavilion. One of the largest exhibitions of the period was staged in 1883 when Georges Petit Galleries borrowed three thousand Japanese works of art from private collections for an exhibition organized by Gonse and Hayashi. Theo and Vincent van Gogh organized an exhibition of *ukiyo-e* prints held at the Café Tambourin in 1887. Vincent recorded the event in his painting, *La Femme au Tambourin*; in the same year he painted a copy of one of Hiroshige's woodcuts and *Portrait of Père Tanguy with Japanese Prints*. In 1888, Bing organized an exhibition of Japanese prints in one of his shops. The French mania for Japanese prints culminated in the enormous exhibition at the Ecole des beaux-arts which opened on April 25, 1890. The exhibition catalogue included

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[18] Ibid., 80.

[19] Ibid., 79.

[20] Ibid., 83.

over seven hundred entries for prints, albums and illustrated books from private collections; Bing was the author of the preface.[21]

In order to reach a wide audience, in 1888 Bing began publishing a periodical devoted to the appreciation of Japanese visual culture for artists, collectors, and the general public. In May he published the first issue of a monthly periodical, *Le Japon artistique*, which ran for four years until 1891 and was translated into English and German.[22] With the aid of the magazine, Bing developed clientele in Germany, Britain and the United States; by the end of the 1880s, he had a shop in New York City at 220 Fifth Avenue. Each issue of *Le Japon artistique* contained a lengthy, illustrated article on subjects as varied as Japanese architecture, jewelry, printmaking, and ceramics. The cover of each magazine, which measured 33 x 25 cm, reproduced a Japanese print in color. Advertisements for shops that sold Japanese art, including Bing's, were also included.

**The Color Yellow and Japanese Art**

The color yellow had such a significant presence in French publications on Japanese art of the 1880s that I would argue that by 1890 in Paris, canary yellow

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[21] A copy of this exhibition catalogue is in the collection of the Prints and Drawings Department at the Zimmerli Museum of Art, Rutgers University.

[22] In creating such a periodical, Bing followed in the footsteps of Burty who had been the first to publish such a journal. Burty's magazine had been *Le Japon artiste*, but only one issue appeared, possibly because it was too expensive a venture for the critic to pursue, or because it was too specialized to appeal to a broad audience. The single published issue contained etchings by Burty of Japanese objects in his collection; although some of the etchings are known, no copy of the complete journal has been found. The German title of the publication was *Japanischer Formenschatz*. It was translated into German by Justus Brinckmann, Director of the Museum for Art and Industry in Hamburg and printed in Leipzig. In English, it was published as *Artistic Japan* and edited by Marcus B. Huish, Director of the Fine Art Society in London.

conjured associations with *Japonisme*. For example, in the 1886 edition of Gonse's *L'Art japonais* published in Paris by the Maison Quantin, the end papers are brilliant canary yellow and the board covers are wrapped with yellow-gold cloth (figure 3.1).[23] Brilliant yellow endpapers may also be found in Félix Régamey's *Okoma: Roman japonais illustré*, illustrated with reproductions of drawings by Chiguenoï.[24] In addition, the covers of many issues of Bing's magazine *Le Japon artistique* reproduce *ukiyo-e* prints that have predominantly yellow backgrounds.

One can easily argue that French publications of the 1880s on Japanese art adopted yellow as a signature color because it was featured so predominantly in *ukiyo-e* ranging from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries.[25] The earliest *ukiyo-e* prints were colored by hand using pigments of red lead and yellow, probably selected for their brilliance and availability. The pigment yellow was available from a variety of sources including *ukon* (saffron), *kuchinashi* (cape jasmine or gardenia, *shiō* (gamboges), or *kiō* (stone yellow compounded from sulfur and arsenic.) These early prints, dating from around 1690-1715, are referred to as *tan-e*.[26] A beautiful example of a large *tan-e* is Torii Kiyomasu I's *The Actors Nakamura Gentarō as an Oiran and Ikushima Shingorō*

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[23] There is a copy of this edition is in the collection of the Prints and Drawings Department at the Zimmerli Museum of Art, Rutgers University (2000.0792).

[24] Félix Régamey, *Okoma: Roman japonais illustré* (Paris: E. Plon et Cie, 1883). A copy of this book is in the collection of the Prints and Drawings Department of the Zimmerli Museum of Art, Rutgers University (1989.1347).

[25] *Ukiyo-e* prints are generally considered to have come of age and flourished during Japan's Edo Period (1615-1868).

[26] Harold P. Stern, *Master Prints of Japan* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1974), 14.

*as a Man*, c. 1690-1710 (figure 3.2) in which both yellow and red are used throughout the sinuous forms of the figure's costumes.

After *tan-e* prints waned in popularity, a coloring technique was employed which came to be known as *urushi-e*, or lacquer pictures. In these prints, a small quantity of lacquer or glue was mixed with the lampblack ink to produce a rich, lustrous black. These prints were often embellished by scattering powdered gold dust, or more often, the less-expensive brass filings, over selected areas of the design. An example of such a print is Torii Kiyonobu II's *The Actor Ogino Isaburō in a Dance from Tokiwa Genji*, c. 1720-1750 (figure 3.3) in which the dynamic pattern of the actor's swirling robes, sword and fan are colored in a deep yellow-gold. Okumura Toshinobu's *Young Man Vending Love Prophecies*, c. 1730-1750 (figure 3.4) is another example of an *urushi-e* decorated with brass powder in which yellow is the dominant color.

The final development of the *ukiyo-e* print was the *nishiki-e*, or full color print. *Nishiki* translates as "brocade;" these prints were named after the textile because of their varied rich colors. Examples of full-color *ukiyo-e* prints which in which yellow plays a primary role in the design are compositions by Suzuki Harunobu such as *Lady on the Verandah after a Bath*, 1766 (figure 3.5) and *Two Girls Fishing in Shallow Water: Netting Medaka*, c. 1760 (figure 3.6). Later *ukiyo-e* prints utilized backgrounds of un-modulated brilliant yellow, such at Kitagawa Utamaro's series *Hokkoku Goshoku Sumi* (*Five Kinds of Ink from the North Country*), c. 1789 (figures 3.7-8). The title is a play on words suggestive of the five varieties of female residents of the Yoshiwara, ranging from the geisha, the most elegant courtesan, to the lowest rank of prostitute known as the

teppō, who operated outside of the city limits. The background color of each of the five prints in the series is a rich, un-modulated yellow.

*Surimono* were another kind of *ukiyo-e* print that was popular in Japan during the first third of the nineteenth century. As opposed to the color woodblock prints commercially published and designed by the *uikyo-e* artists from the beginning of the eighteenth century, *surimono* were characterized by the incorporation of word and image, as well as being published privately and distributed to much smaller audiences. Most often, *surimono* were commissioned by poets as gifts to their friends to celebrate the return of spring and the beginning of the new year. Some *surimono* were also distributed as announcements of musical performances or to commemorate personal events such as a name change, the beginning of a professional career, the acceptance of a protégé, or the opening of a business.

The palette of *surimono* changed dramatically between the 1790s and the 1830s. Early cards were printed in pale colors with a key block printed in a pale gray, but by the early 1810s, the number of pigments increased and a larger area of the sheets were filled with color. In the mid-1820s, pigments became more saturated, and it was common for the entire sheet to be filled with color; at the same time, the figures or the main feature of the design was enlarged, so much so that sometimes figures needed to be bent in order to fit within the margins of the sheet. From the 1790s, gold was commonly used as a feature in the designs of *surimono*, and by the 1820s, it had come to be used extensively, sometimes as a background. For example, a gold background is utilized in Utagawa Kunisada, *Ichikawa Danjuro VII and Bando Mitsugoro III*, 1827 (figure 3.9) an image of two leading kabuki actors performing a scene from the *Tale of the Soga Brothers*. The

figures' vibrant, intricately patterned costumes are accentuated by a flat, gold background. *Surimono* designers and printers employed a wider range of colors and printing effects than the designers of commercial woodcuts. While most colors in commercial prints of the period were applied evenly over large areas of the sheet, *surimono* printers often printed in delicate shades and were able to achieve a wide variety of textures depending on the way that they mixed the pigments, the way it was applied to the block, and the amount of pressure used in printing. All in all, artists were freer to experiment with color in *surimono* than they were in commercial prints; four artists in particular—Hokusai, Hokkei, Gakutei and Schumman—are known for their use of color in *surimono*.[27]

The gold grounds most often used in Rimpa paintings may have also been influential on nineteenth-century French artists. Rimpa, a term coined in recent years, refers to a highly decorative painting style that developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Japan during the Edo period.[28] In Rimpa art, gold was pounded into thin flat sheets and extensively for interior decoration and in gold backgrounds of paintings on screens and even sliding doors. The magnificent gold background in such screens could represent actual ground or clouds, and was also used to suggest empty

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[27] Roger Keyes, *Surimono: Privately Published Japanese Prints in the Spencer Museum of Art* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1984), 14. For further literature on *surimono*, see Charlotte van Rappard-Boon and Lee Bruschke-Johnson, *Surimono: Poetry and Image in Japanese Prints* (Leiden and Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing and Rijksmuseum, 2000).

[28] The term "Rimpa" derives from the name of the painter Ogata Kōrin (Rimpa means 'School of Kōrin') who had himself further developed the style of the earlier Tawaraya Sōtatsu who is regarded as the founder of the school. See Yūzō Yamane, Masato Naitō, and Timothy Clark, *Rimpa Art from the Identisu Collection, Tokyo* (London: British Museum Press, 1998).

space. Rimpa paintings were known in Paris in the 1880s—Gonse praised them in *L'Art japonais*—and Gauguin could easily have seen and been influenced by them.

**Félix Buhot and *Japonisme***

A suite of ten etchings by Félix Buhot (1847-1898) entitled *Japonisme*, 1885 (Bourcard 11-20) (figures 3.10- 12) may have influenced Gauguin in his choice of paper for the *Volpini Suite*. Buhot incorporated Japanese motifs into much of his printed oeuvre. *Japonisme*, printed on sheets of brilliant yellow paper, reproduced Japanese objects such as a mask, an ivory pillbox, a bronze figure of a genie, a porcelain tea box, and a lacquer vase from Burty's collection. In several of the prints, Buhot intensified the effects of *ukiyo-e* by superimposing Japanese characters printed in red ink—both real and of his own invention—over his primary subject. These abstract, calligraphic designs mimic the appearance of Japanese collectors' marks on *ukiyo-e* prints, as did Buhot's stamped monogram with an owl, which he often printed in red at the bottom platemark of his prints. The red calligraphic overlay echoes the effect of the marginalia that Buhot used in many of his etchings, a practice that Gauguin may have had in mind in zincographs such as *Joys of Brittany* in which two dogs run outside the bounds of the main image into the margin. Flecks of gold irregularly distributed throughout Buhot's paper heighten the brilliance of the yellow sheets and helps to convey the preciousness of Burty's collection.

*Japonisme* was printed in an edition of one hundred on Dutch paper, fifty on Japan paper, and an unknown number on the yellow-gold paper.[29] The extraordinary

[29] Gustave Bourcard, *Félix Buhot: catalogue descriptif de son oeuvre gravé* (Paris: H. Floury, 1899), 7.

similarity between Buhot and Gauguin's papers suggests to me that Gauguin likely saw *Japonisme*. Buhot's suite would have been in circulation in Paris throughout the late 1880s when Gauguin was periodically living there. No one has drawn the connection between Buhot's *Japonisme* and Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* previously, but the paper as well as the obvious influence of Japanese prints in Gauguin's zincographs suggests to me that Gauguin had seen Buhot's etchings.

**Gauguin and *Japonisme***

Exotic landscapes, culture and art became a part of Gauguin's early childhood in 1849 when his parents emigrated to Lima, Peru where they lived for five years with relatives. At the age of seventeen, Gauguin joined the merchant marine and later the French navy. During a period of six years, he called on ports in South America, India, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the North Sea. Once he began painting full-time, he quickly sought to escape the urban center of Paris and set out for the last outposts of primitive naturalism, first Brittany, then Martinique, and finally the South Seas to Tahiti and the remote Marquesas Islands.

In a letter from Arles, Gauguin advised Bernard to look at Japanese prints, "Look at the Japanese who are certainly excellent draftsmen, and you will see life depicted in the open air and in the sunshine without shadows, color being used only as a combination of tones, diverse harmonies, giving the impression of warmth, etc…"[30] Apparently Gauguin never traveled without *ukiyo-e* as elements in his portable museum. According

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[30] Gauguin to Bernard, Arles, November 1888, Paul Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends*, ed. Maurice Malingue, trans. Henry J. Stenning (Boston : MFA Publications, 2003), 112.

to an article by Armand Séguin written in 1903, the walls of Gauguin's studio in Le Pouldu were decorated with *ukiyo-e* by Utamaro.[31] Jean de Rontonchamp stated that Gauguin hung a frieze of prints by Hokusai and Utamaro in Schuffenecker's studio that he used in 1890.[32] According to Julien Leclercq, between trips to the South Seas, Gauguin decorated his Pont-Aven studio in 1894 with Japanese prints.[33]

In addition to using Japanese prints to decorate the walls of his studios, Gauguin also pasted them onto the covers of his own manuscripts. For example, two prints by Hokusai—*Warriors in Combat* from *Ehon Wakan no Homare* (*Glories of Japan and China*), 1837 and *Fujiwara Sane* from *Manga*, 1816—are pasted inside the covers of the manuscript of *Noa Noa* in the collection of the Musée de Louvre. Gauguin added three *ukiyo-e* woodcuts of beautiful women by Kunitsuna II to the inside covers and back fly-leaf of the manuscript copy of *Avant et Après*. *Ukiyo-e* woodcuts were a part of the visual reference collection that Gauguin brought on his final journey to the South Seas. He recorded his abiding interest in Japanese art in several different passages in his journal, *Avant et Après*:

> In a Japanese household everything is simple and composed, nature and the imagination alike.[34]

> Japanese sketches, prints of Hokusai, lithographs of Daumier, cruel observations of Forain—gathered together in an album, not by chance but by my own

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[31] Armand Séguin, "Paul Gauguin," *l'Occident* (1903): 165.

[32] Jean de Rotonchamp, *Paul Gauguin, 1848-1903* (Paris: Crès, 1925), 77.

[33] Julien Leclercq, "Exposition Paul Gauguin," *Mercure de France*, no. 13 (1895): 121. Leclercq does not specify any artists in particular.

[34] Paul Gauguin, *Gauguin's Intimate Journals*, trans. Van Wyck Brooks (New York: Dover Publications, 1997), 23-24.

> deliberate will. Among them I am enjoying a photograph of a painting by Giotto. Because they appear so very different I want to demonstrate their bonds of relationship. In this warrior of Hokusai, Raphael's St. Michael has become Japanese. In another drawing of his, he and Michel Angelo meet. Michel Angelo (the great caricaturist!) shakes hands with Rembrandt. Hokusai draws freely. To draw freely is not to lie to oneself.[35]

> In Japanese art there are no values. Well, all the better! It all depends on the point of view from which one judges. In a shooting-gallery the perspective is itself decoration. One can get along without hangings or mural paintings. One ought always to feel the wall.[36]

Although a decade had passed since Gauguin recommended that Bernard look at Japanese prints to rid himself of the need to depict shadows, his admiration of Japanese art endured. The inventory of Gauguin's meager possessions left in his hut in the Marquesas following his death in 1903 listed a Japanese sword, a Japanese book and forty-five prints tacked to the walls of his dwelling.[37]

It was probably the influence of Degas and the Impressionists that initially led Gauguin to Japanese prints. The first evidence of the Japanese in Gauguin's oeuvre may be found in a still life painting, *Flowers and Books (Fleurs et livres)*, 1882 (W. 2002, 96) (figure 3.13). In this simple arrangement of flowers and books, a bouquet of what may be chrysanthemums wrapped in paper is strewn across two slim volumes, bound in a Japanese fashion.[38] A more overt reference to *Japonisme* may be found in a small, coffin-

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[35] Ibid., 46-47.

[36] Ibid., 91.

[37] E. Frébault, et. al., "Inventaire des biens de Gauguin," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, vol. 47 (January-April 1956): 201-204.

[38] Daniel Wildenstein, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making. Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings (1873-1888)* (Paris and Milan: Skira and Wildenstein Institute, 2002), 106.

shaped, carved wooden box dating from 1884 that combined the eastern and western motifs of ballet dancers and copies of netsuke related to theatrical masks (figure 3.14).[39] In 1885-86 Gauguin painted several still lifes with oriental motifs, including *Still Life with Carafon and Figurine (Nature morte avec carafon et figurine)*, (W. 2002, 171), 1885 (figure 3.15) in which a lacquer tray and statuette with an air of eighteenth-century *chinoiserie* are arranged in front of a colorful tapestry. In numerous later still lifes such as *Still Life with Fan* (Nature morte à l'eventail), 1888 (W. 2002, 259) (figure 3.16) and *Still Life with Japanese Print (Nature morte à l'estampe japonaise),* 1888 (W. 2002, 260) (figure 3.17) Gauguin's interest in *Japonisme* became more clearly manifest as *ukiyo-e* prints were incorporated into compositions.[40]

*Young Wrestlers—Brittany (Jeunes Lutteurs—Bretagne)*, 1888 (W. 2002, 298) (figure 3.18) was one of the first paintings in which Gauguin whole-heartedly embraced the stylistic characteristics of Japanese prints. Gauguin likely adapted the pose of his figures from one of the many illustrations of wrestlers in Hokusai's *Manga*. The lack of a coherent setting also borrows from a Japanese model. The figures are located in a simplified space of a radically tilting slope of grass, painted with uniform, un-modulated green brushstrokes. The dramatic cropping of the space is emphasized by the head and shoulders of a figure in the upper right clamoring up the incline and a wedge of foaming water in the upper left corner. Gauguin described the painting to Schuffenecker as "not at all in the Degas style…A fight between two boys near the river, quite Japanese, by a

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[39] Jay Martin Kloner, "The Influence of Japanese Prints on Edouard Manet and Paul Gauguin" (Ph.D. diss. Columbia University, 1968), 146.

[40] In his Ph.D. dissertation, Kloner describes numerous compositions by Gauguin which are directly related to Japanese prints.

Peruvian Indian."[41] Not only did Gauguin deny the influence of a French artist—Degas—he denied his own identify as French, preferring instead to identify himself as a non-European, thus linking himself more closely with his eastern prototype.

> Two weeks later, Gauguin wrote to van Gogh about the same painting:
>
> I have just completed a Breton wrestling match, which I am certain you will like. Two boys, one wearing vermillion pants, the other blue ones. Above right, a boy climbing up out of the water—green grass—pure emerald green, shading off into chrome yellow: unrefined, as in Japanese crépons [cheap prints on crepe-like paper]. Also, above, a boiling waterfall in pinkish white, with a rainbow on the edge of the canvas just beside the frame, Below a white patch, a black hat, and a blue smock.[42]

Gauguin associated the broad, shadowless area of green, which nearly fills the background of the painting, with *ukiyo-e*. His emphasis on painting in an "unrefined" manner suggests the significance of the lack of modeling and light and shadow. His mention of chrome yellow in the background is clearly associated with Japanese art. This desire to eliminate the effects of light and shadow—the very cornerstone of Impressionism—revealed Gauguin's rejection of his forefathers and his desire to do something daring and original in his art.[43]

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[41] Gauguin to Schuffenecker, July 8, 1888, Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends*, ed. Malingue, 99.

[42] Gauguin to Vincent van Gogh, July 24 or 25, 1888, Paul Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin*, ed. Victor Merlhès (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), 200-201. "Je viens de terminer une lutte bretonne que vous aimerez j'en sûr. Dexu gamins caleçon bleu et calçon vermillon. Un dans le haut à droite qui monte sortant de l'eau—Pelouse verte—Véronèze pur dégradant jusqu'au jaune de chrome sans execution comme les crépons japonais. En haute cascade d'eau bouillonante blanc rose et arc-en-ciel sur le bord près du cadre. En bas tache blanche un chapeau noir et blouse bleue."

[43] *Vision after the Sermon* is considered Gauguin's breakthrough Synthetist painting in which he reduced forms to simple color shapes and broad outlines. Gauguin's debt to Japanese prints is evident in the simplified forms, flat un-modulated planes of color, dramatic angels, cropping, and the strong diagonal of the tree that separates the composition into halves: the parishioners and the vision. Furthermore, the figures of Jacob and the angel borrow from Hoksuai's *Manga*.

The *Volpini Suite*, made at the high-point of Gauguin's passion for *ukiyo-e*, could scarcely have existed without the influence of the Japanese prototype. The lack of modeling, sparse indications of setting and atmosphere in many of the prints, and dramatic flattening of perspective are very much influenced by *ukiyo-e*. The saffron yellow paper may have been influenced by Japanese prints in Gauguin's or Vincent's print collections. In addition, Gauguin would have been familiar with popular contemporary French publications on Japanese art like Bing's *Le Japon artistique*.

The Japanese notes that resound throughout the *Suite* further underline the connection of the yellow paper with Japanese art. The cover sheet composition decorated with Leda, the swan and flowers set within a circle evokes Utagawa Kuniyoshi's *O Kane, A Strong woman from Omi Province*, c. 1843-47 (figure 3.19), a Japanese woodcut in which a bust length portrait of a woman is also enclosed within a circular form surrounded by flowers.[44] I would suggest that the frontispiece may have also derived from Kōchōrō Kunisada's series *Portraits of Famous, Unusual Women from Different Places* (*Mei-ijo hogaku*), c. 1830s (figure 3.20) in which bust length portraits of women are surrounded by a *toshidama* (seal ring). Vincent van Gogh owned prints from both of this series which Gauguin would have had access to in Arles.[45]

Colta Ives has linked *Dramas of the Sea* to a Japanese color woodcut in a fan-shaped format, Sadahide's *The Seaweed Gatherer*, c. 1850.[46] In *Dramas of the Sea*, Gauguin inverted Sadahide's light-hearted treatment of a man earning his living by

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[44] Ives, *Great Wave*, 99.

[45] Van Rappard-Boon, van Gulik, and van Bremen-Ito, *Catalogue of the Van Gogh Museum's Collection of Japanese prints*, 148-149.

[46] Ives, *Great Wave*, 103.

reaping the fruits of the sea. Not only does Gauguin turn the fan format upside-down, but he transforms the anecdote of a smiling, barefoot figure wading amongst the waves into one of man confronted by impending doom. The companion image to the maelstrom—*Dramas of the Sea: Brittany*—an image of three women at the edge of a cliff praying for the safe return of fishermen, is also irregularly shaped to suggest a fan. Between 1885 and the end of his life in the Marquesas, Gauguin made more than twenty drawings in the shape of fans.[47] Fan-shaped drawings were made in each locale that was most important to Gauguin's artistic production—Brittany, Martinique and the South Seas.

In making drawings in the shape of fans, Gauguin followed in the footsteps of his Impressionist predecessors. Durand-Ruel, aware of Pissarro's poverty, had urged him to produce small fan-shaped gouaches that would sell in a marketplace that was eager for *Japonisme*. Pissarro may have passed this advice along to Gauguin, whose first fans date from the period when he had recently lost his job on the Bourse. In the fourth Impressionist exhibition, there was a room entirely devoted to fans; Degas contributed five and Pissarro sent nine. To Degas, the shape of the fan must have suggested that of the stage at the Opera, for he used it for large compositions of dancers who seem dwarfed by the vastness of the surrounding panoramic space. Whether or not Gauguin's first fans were made with the hope of financial gain, this was a quintessentially impressionist format, and the gallery of fans was a tribute to the influence of Japanese art.

As in the *Volpini Suite*, the subjects of many of Gauguin's fan-shaped drawings derive from his paintings. For example, *Three Seated Breton Women* (*Trois Bretonnes assises*), 1886-87 (figure 3.21) draws upon *Breton Women Chatting*. Both compositions

[47] Gauguin's fan-shaped compositions are described and illustrated in Jean-Pierre Zingg, *The Fans of Paul Gauguin*, trans. Simon Strachan (Paris: Éditions Avant & Après, 2001).

depict Breton women wearing coiffes in profile in pastoral landscapes; the painting and the drawing both include the same male figure ploughing a field in the distance. The fan-shaped composition of *Three Seated Breton Women* is artfully arranged; a *mise en page*, the figures, foliage and central curving tree appear casually strewn across the sheet, but in fact their skillful placement echoes the overall contour of the fan.

The figure of the woman in the waves, or Ondine as Gauguin sometimes identified her, was also the subject of a fan-shaped work on paper (figure 3.22). In the drawing, Gauguin stayed close to the format of the initial composition. Once again, a red-haired bather is framed against a green sea. The white sprays of foam curve, repeating the fan-shaped format.

Another fan-shaped drawing, *Martinique Sketch (Esquisse martiniquaise)*, 1887 (figure 3.23) foreshadows elements from the zincograph *Martinique Pastorale*, made two years later. In the drawing, several Martinique women linger in a lush, sunlit landscape. While their poses are not precisely reproduced in the print, their languid grace and sinuous forms are similar. Perhaps most remarkable is the palette of the drawing: the background is almost entirely a vivid yellow. As he matured, Gauguin's fan-shaped compositions, such as the two *Volpini Suite* images and the woman in the waves drawing, became increasingly original. He succeeded in borrowing selectively from the Japanese aesthetic and manipulating it to suit his own Synthetist style; he effectively used the fan-shaped format as a Symbolist, as a form that implied meaning.

**Popular Posters of the 1870s and 1880s**

In addition to Japanese prints and French publications on Japanese art of the 1880s, popular posters may have played a role in Gauguin's choice of paper for the *Volpini Suite*. The 1860s brought the phenomenon of the entertainment poster to Paris as the number of dance halls and cafés-concerts in the city's capital began to increase exponentially. The earliest posters were dominated by text emphasizing the details of venue, time and place rather than images of the performer. Jules Chéret, known as the "father of the poster," opened his first printing house in Paris in 1866. His innovations in color lithography and imaginative designs revolutionized the entertainment poster and made colorful *affiches* a fixture of late nineteenth-century Parisian life.

Of course it was Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) who mastered the art of color lithography and the popular poster in late nineteenth-century Paris. His daring, colorful posters of performers such as Aristide Bruant, Yvette Guilbert, and May Milton brought fame not only to the singers and dancers, but brought the artist himself into the limelight as well.[48] Although Toulouse-Lautrec's *affiches* were made after 1890 and after Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*, lithographic posters advertising the nightlife of Paris were prolific by the early 1880s. The censorship laws that had kept newspapers and journals in strict control during the first decade of the Third Republic were relaxed in July 1881 after the Republicans achieved a majority in the Senate. Publishing of all kinds escalated dramatically, including journals and posters advertising everything from luxurious café-concerts in central Paris to seedy cabarets in Montmartre.

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[48] Mary Weaver Chapin addresses the rise of the popular poster in her discussion of Toulouse-Lautrec and his posters of the famous performers of Montmartre in "Toulouse-Lautrec & the Culture of Celebrity," in Richard Thomson et. al., *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre* (Washington, D.C., and Princeton: National Gallery of Art and Princeton University Press, 2005), 46-63.

Emile Lévy was both a lithographic artist and one of the most important professional printers of lithographic posters working in Paris from 1875-95. The son of the lithographer and printer Charles Lévy, Emile Lévy produced a wide range of posters advertising everything from the circus, café-concert, theatrical and musical performances to contemporary French novels.[49] Among over two hundred posters printed by Lévy in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale, more than ten are printed on bright, canary yellow paper such as two sheets advertising theatrical performances: "Les Martinettes" printed in 1873 (figure 3.24), and "Mes Transformations" in 1875 (figures 3.25). The yellow sheets are large, measuring approximately 80 x 60 cm. Although the paper used in Levy's posters is lighter-weight than the paper Gauguin used in the *Volpini Suite*, there are similarities between the sheets. Both are wove and apparently machine made. The paper used for the posters has a smoother finish than that used for the *Volpini Suite*; fibers are visible, but only under magnification. The color of the paper used for the posters and the *Volpini Suite* are remarkably similar, as is the effect of printing black ink on a brilliant ground.

Gauguin lived in Paris for much of the 1870s as well as sporadically during the 1880s, and would have been inundated with such advertisements. An essential aspect of his artistic practice was to assimilate a variety of sources into his art, and it is likely that the style of the popular posters of the period found their way into his first set of prints. Certainly the large format of the sheets used in the *Volpini Suite*—50 x 65 cm—suggests the format of the posters as did his use of black ink vibrating on a brilliant yellow

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[49] Jacques Lethève and Françoise Gardey, *Bibliothèque nationale département des estampes Inventaire du fonds français après 1800*, vols. 1-14 (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1967), 14: 282-292.

background. Levy's posters are remarkably sophisticated in their use of lithographic techniques. A shadow behind the figure in "Mes Transformations" was achieved with lavis or tusche, giving the design texture and three-dimensionality. The lavis was used in conjunction with lithographic ink applied with a pen. Such posters are testaments to the commercial use of lithography by the 1870s—the technique was as highly complex as it was widespread.

*Le Livre de demain*, a book by Albert de Rochas published in 1884 in Paris by Imprimerie R. Marchand, suggested the contemporary interest in specialty papers.[50] Printed in a limited edition of 250, the book began with small samples of historic papers including papyrus, Chine, Japon, and papers of the fifteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. An essay on the history of paper and another on ink followed. Part Two, titled "Applications" revealed the variety of paper available in the mid-1880s, providing examples of more than forty specialty papers, colors of ink, and a range of book decoration. All of the paper samples are thin, wove, and machine- made. Dramatic combinations of paper and ink are included, such as lavender paper with black and red ink; turquoise paper with blue and brown ink; intense green paper with brown and green ink, shocking pink paper with black and gold ink, and most striking for this discussion, canary yellow paper with black and green ink (figure 3.26).[51] French poetry was printed

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[50] See Albert de Rochas, *Le Livre de demain* (Paris: Blois Raoul Marchand, 1884) in the collection of the Zimmerli Museum of Art (1994.0235).

[51] French poetry is printed on the sample sheets; the following poems are printed on the yellow sheets: "Le Jasmin d'Espagne" by E. Richepin; "Epigramme" by De Cailly; "Le Paradis perdu" by Alfred Nancey, and "Lou Rhin Devignaire (Galejado)" by Fréd Donnadieu. On the final page is a silhouette of three bourgeois gentlemen smoking, wearing black top hats, and walking with canes.

on each sheet with elaborate, decorative borders in various colored inks. The book's preface demonstrates the contemporary level of interest in books and printed matter:

> Most bibliophiles only have vague ideas, many of them erroneous, about paper, ink, and the printing process. If they publish a volume, they leave the task of determining its configuration to the editor, who, not interested in elaborate experiments, will limit himself to traditional types. Also, in spite of the new resources that modern industry puts at our door, the art of typography has remained stationary outside of two or three establishments of the first order. There does not exist, that is to say, an intermediary between the large, luxurious publications, and the common ones. I thought to be pleasing to those who live in the provinces as I do, and prefer their books to be outfitted like elegant garments.
>
> It is easy to ascertain that in the arts, color has taken on a greater and greater role. Is this phenomenon one of the manifestations of instinct that makes the advance of civilizations and the expansion of great cities toward the West, as if man felt himself invincibly attracted toward the luminous regions where the crimson sun is in its last fire? Is it the consequence of the education of our eyes that takes today pleasure to distinguish and to compare the perceptions formerly confused? Is it the simple result of progress that senses have superseded thought,n the result of the neurotic feminization of our generation. It is of little importance. What is certain is that the reader begins to stop looking always at black on white and that the Book of Tomorrow will not look like the Book of Yesterday. I have tried to show how color can be introduced here, not only to decorate but also to serve as an auxiliary means of communication for the writer. The thesis is delicate and my reasons may perhaps be too subtle; be it so, I take for epigraph the motto that ornaments the door of an old townhouse near the printer Marchand: VSV VETERA NOVA Old things have been used here in a new way; if I am not mistaken, today's novelties will soon become old fashioned through familiarity.[52]

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[52] De Rochas, *Le Livre de demain*, unpaginated preface, "La plupart des bibliophiles n'ont que des idées vagues, souvent même erronées, sur le papier, l'encre et les procédés d'impression. S'ils publient un volume, ils laissent à leur éditeur le soin d'en déterminer la forme, et celui-ci, peu soucieux de se lancer dans des essaies onéreux, s'en tient généralement aux types classiques. Aussi, malgré les ressources nouvelles que l'industrie moderne met à la portée de tous, voyons-nous l'art typographique rester stationnaire en dehors de deux ou trios maisons de premier ordre: il n'existe**,** pour ainsi dire, aucun intermédiaire entre les publications de très grand luxe et les publications communes. J'ai pensé être agréable à ceux qui, habitant comme moi la province, aiment à présenter leurs oeuvres sous un vêtement élégant à l'aide des ressources locales en leur donnant le moyen de guider leur imprimeur.

Il est facile de constater que, dans les arts, la couleur tend à prendre une place de plus en plus grande. Est-ce là une des manifestations de l'instinct qui a fait marcher les civilisations et s'étendre les grandes cités vers l'Occident, comme si l'homme se sentait invinciblement attiré vers ces régions lumineuses que le soleil empourpre de ses derniers feux? Est-ce la conséquence de l'éducation de notre oeil, qui prend aujourd'hui plaisir à distinguer et à comparer des perceptions autrefois confuses? Est-ce tout simplement le résultat des progrès du domaine de la sensation sur celui de la pensée dans notre génération efféminée par la névrose? Peu importe. Ce qui est certain, c'est que le lecteur commence à se lasser de voir toujours du noir sur du blanc, et

The paper that Gauguin used in the *Volpini Suite* has a vivid and saturated yellow color akin to a canary yellow. The color shifts from slightly greenish in fluorescent light to more orange-yellow in natural light. The paper is significantly heavier than the yellow paper sample included in *Le Livre de demain*; Gauguin's paper is medium weight with a slightly stiff hand. It is not coated with pigment, that is, the color penetrates through the thickness of the sheet. The paper is wove, has a uniform formation which appears to be machine made, and it does not have a watermark. I have had the paper analyzed using X-ray fluorescence and the presence of chrome yellow pigment has been confirmed.[53] It is possible that Gauguin's yellow paper was made by Canson Montgolfier at Vidalon in the Ardeche, one of the biggest makers of good quality colored paper in France at the time. Gauguin is known to have used some of Canson's papers. The 50 x 65 cm size is the traditional French paper size called *raisin*—originally watermarked, as its name suggests, with a bunch of grapes.

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que le *Livre de demain* ne ressemblera pas au *Livre d'hier*. J'ai essayé de montrer comment la couleur pouvait y être introduite, non seulement pour l'orner mais encore pour servir d'auxiliaire à l'écrivain. La thèse est délicate et mes raisons pourront paraître trop subtiles; quoi qu'il en soit, je prends pour épigraphe la devise qui orne la porte d'un vieil hôtel voisin de l'imprimerie Marchand, VSV VETERA NOVA De vieilles choses ont été employées ici d'une façon nouvelle; si je suis dans le vrai, mes nouveautés ne tarderont pas à devenir des vieilleries par l'usage qu'on en fera."

[53] I am grateful to Moyna Stanton, Paper Conservator at the Cleveland Museum of Art, for her assistance in analyzing the paper used in the *Volpini Suite*. I would also like to thank Peter Bower, Paper Historian and Analyst in London for his assistance with the fiber analysis. Bower's analysis of the paper fibers is ongoing, and we hope eventually to be able to identify the manufacturer of Gauguin's paper.

**The Influence of Faience**

Thus far, scholars have not made a connection between the yellow paper of the *Volpini Suite* and faience, the famous pottery made in Quimper since the late seventeenth century. Examples of Quimper pottery feature prominently in still life paintings that Gauguin made during his years in Brittany, and it is clear that the artist appreciated the pottery's colorful, naïve scenes depicting peasants dressed in the individual costumes of Breton villages.

Around 1920, the HB factory (Hubaudière-Bousquet) began to manufacture a set of Quimper tableware that utilized a yellow ground. Obviously, this post-dates the *Volpini Suite* by over forty years; however, even in the nineteenth century, yellow was one of the dominant colors used in faience as two plates from the mid-nineteenth century reveal (figure 3.27). While I do not argue that the yellow used in faience in and of itself provided Gauguin with the inspiration to utilize yellow paper in the *Volpini Suite*; the paper may have conjured associations with Quimper pottery for the artist, and his use of a plate design on the portfolio's cover strengthens this hypothesis.

**Vincent van Gogh and the Color Yellow**

> According to Druick's and Zegers' study of Vincent van Gogh, Gauguin, and their time together in Arles, the impact that the two artists had on one another lay beneath the surface of the two artists' works. Rather than a direct influence marking the surface of their paintings, covert emulation and resistance characterized their rapport.[54] Even after their disastrous parting in Arles on December 23, 1888, Gauguin and Vincent "continued to act as a crucial absent presence in the other's efforts."[55] Although Gauguin denied it in later writings, his way of painting—and particularly his palette—was tremendously influenced by the time he spent painting with Vincent.

[54] Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South*, 3.

[55] Ibid, 264.

> In spite of their philosophical and practical disagreements as to whether an artist should paint more from nature or the imagination, how "quickly" one should paint, and even how to begin painting a new subject, the artists' effect on one another was profound, and for Gauguin, long lasting. I will argue that shortly before Gauguin arrived in Arles in the autumn of 1888, yellow had manifested itself as a vital aspect of Vincent's personal symbolism. From the winter of 1888 and spring of 1889, yellow appeared in Gauguin's own work in a new way, and after his departure from Arles it continued to play an important role in his art, not only in the *Volpini Suite*, but in other works as well.

Yellow had played an important symbolic role in Vincent's paintings from the mid-1880s. *Still Life with Bible and* "*Joie de Vivre*," 1885 (F. 113) (figure 3.28) is one of the first paintings in which yellow took on a symbolic role. In the still life, Vincent juxtaposed two books—a heavy Bible open to the Old Testament book of Isaiah, chapter 35, and a paperback copy of Emile Zola's contemporary novel. While the Bible is the overwhelming presence in the composition, Zola's small novel, backed in brilliant yellow paper covers, sparkles with life and threatens to overwhelm the heavy tome. For Vincent, Zola's novel exemplified contemporaneity. In *Joie de Vivre*, Zola raised issues of faith in an age of science, questioning whether it was possible in the absence of traditional religious belief to accept life's miseries and lead a meaningful existence. That Vincent painted Zola's book yellow is significant; he associated the color yellow with that which was contemporary and full of life. The little, glittering paperback novel outshines the Bible, offering an antidote to the circumscribed religious upbringing of van Gogh's youth. Affordable editions of contemporary novels were typically bound in paper covers of bright yellow, or pale blue or green. Vincent's depiction of a small, paper-bound book would have been recognizable to the contemporary viewer as a contemporary Naturalist novel published by Charpentier. Vincent carried the association with yellow and contemporaiety further in numerous other still life paintings that feature contemporary Naturalist novels bound in yellow paper covers, including *Parisian Novels (Romans*

*parisiens)*, 1887 (F. 359), *Oleanders and Zola's "Joie de Vivre*," 1888 (F.593), and *A Novel Reader*, 1888 (F. 497), pairing resonant literary sources and a visual motif that would have resonated with contemporary viewers.

Before Gauguin joined Vincent in Arles, the two artists exchanged paintings.[56] Vincent sent Gauguin two studies of sunflowers of similar size, painted during the summer of 1887: *Two Sunflowers* (F. 375), in which the flowers rest against a brilliant blue background, and *Two Sunflowers* (F. 376) (figure 3.29) in which two dry blossoms are framed against an agitated background of yellow, orange and green brushstrokes.[57] Vincent adopted the theme of the sunflower—*tournesol* in French, which means turning toward the sun—self-consciously. Rich in traditional symbolism, the sunflower was noted for its responsiveness to the sun, and in art it had come to be associated with man's love of God, and particularly of Christ, the light of the world. With its association with faith, devotion, and love of God, the sunflower came to refer to various forms of secular loves as well: subject for sovereign, child for parent, lover for beloved, friend for friend, as well as the artist's love of nature. In both of Vincent's compositions, the sunflowers are insistently monumental, occupying nearly the entire canvases. His omission of background and perspective emphasized the decorative quality of the paintings while simultaneously accentuating the expressive and symbolic quality of the subject matter. It is significant that the first two paintings that Gauguin had from Vincent were of sunflowers, and that one of the two was a composition executed almost entirely in yellow and gold hues.

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[56] Gauguin gave Vincent a Martinique painting, *Riverside*, 1887(W. 2002, 252).

[57] The two paintings are now in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Kunstmuseum, Basel.

Six months elapsed between Theo and Vincent's initial invitations and Gauguin's departure for the south of France. Van Gogh lived in Arles from May to September in a rented room at the Café de la Gare on place Lamartine, later moving into the sparsely furnished yellow house. In August, the receipt of a letter in which Gauguin stated that he was prepared to come to Arles as soon "as the opportunity arises" filled Vincent with the energy to embark upon a new project.[58] He planned a series of canvases of sunflowers, and described his plan to Bernard in a letter from mid-August:

> I am thinking of decorating my studio with half-a-dozen pictures of Sunflowers: a decoration in which chrome yellow, crude or broken, shall blaze forth against various backgrounds of blue, ranging from the very palest emerald up to royal blue and framed with thin strips of wood painted orange.[59]

During the last two weeks of August, Vincent completed four canvases. First he painted two compositions that contained fewer than six flowers each; the other two paintings were more ambitious. In one of the more elaborate paintings, *Sunflowers*, 1888 (F. 456), a yellow earthenware vase containing more than twelve sunflowers in varying degrees of bloom is set upon a yellow table-top framed against a light blue-green background. After completing this canvas, he painted a pendant of the same size, *Sunflowers*, 1888 (F. 454) (figure 3.30), featuring the same yellow vase and bouquet, this time against a yellow background. Conceived in a period of isolation, the sunflower paintings celebrated Vincent's hope of living with Gauguin in a shared artistic studio. Vincent intended the sunflower paintings to decorate Gauguin's room. A letter to his sister Wil reveals that Vincent associated the color yellow with Arles:

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[58] Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: Studio of the South*, 132.

[59] Vincent van Gogh to Bernard, mid-August, 1888, Van Gogh, *Letters to Bernard*, 75.

> Essentially the color is exquisite here…When it gets scorched and dusty, it does not lose its beauty, for then the landscape gets tones of gold of various tints, green-gold, yellow-gold, pink-gold, and in the same way bronze, copper, in short starting from citron yellow all the way to a dull, dark yellow color like a heap of threshed corn.[60]

The yellow sunflower painting was not Vincent's first yellow-on-yellow composition. In Paris in the autumn of 1887 he painted *Still Life with Quinces and Lemons* (F. 383) (figure 3.31) and even fashioned a painted yellow wooden frame for it. The painting depicts a still life of white grapes, apples, pears and lemons carelessly arranged on a yellow cloth. The palette consists of closely-related yellows, browns and ochres, augmented only by traces of white, green, red and touches of blue for the shadows. There is virtually no perspective or articulation of space in the painting; it is a study in yellows in which the frame forms a part of the decorative whole. At this time in Paris, Seurat was experimenting with painted borders around his compositions, aiming to intensify the effects of his colors. Careful analysis has revealed that Vincent had originally painted the inner edge of the frame red—traces of vermillion can still be detected.[61] He decided, however, to make the painting completely yellow and repainted the frame. The pattern of yellow lines on a ground of a slightly darker ochre that Vincent used to decorate the frame evokes Japanese art. This still life can be seen as the first step toward the yellow-on-yellow sunflowers that he was to execute in the following year.

Around the same time as he was painting the sunflower pictures, Vincent fantasized about visiting Marseilles, the birthplace of Adolphe Monticelli (1824-1886),

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[60] Van Gogh to Wil, Arles, second half of June, or early July, 1888, Van Gogh, *Complete Letters,* 3: 436.

[61] Evert van Uitert, Sjraar van Heugten, and Louis van Tilbourgh, *Vincent van Gogh, Paintings*, trans. Martin Cleaver (Milan; Rome: A. Mondadori Arte; De Luca edizioni d'arte, 1990), 86.

an artist who preoccupied him during his first months in Arles. Monticelli was trained to work in a Neo-classical style, but turned instead to landscape painting. As a young artist he was befriended by the Barbizon painter, Narcisse Diaz and the two worked together in the Forest of Fontainebleau. Influenced by Diaz, Monticelli began using more spontaneous brushstrokes to achieve a more sketch-like finish. Late in life, Monticelli often painted with Cézanne in Aix and Marseille. His experimental, expressive late works, with thick textures and bright colors, verged on abstraction.

Vincent saw some of Monticelli's mature works in Paris in 1886 and was greatly affected by them. He considered Monticelli a colorist equal to Delacroix, and the heavily impastoed surfaces of the artist's works resonated with him. Vincent imitated Monticelli's flower paintings, and later bought six of his paintings for his personal collection. In fantasizing about a pilgrimage to Marseilles, Vincent envisioned dressing "exactly like a Monticelli," wearing a yellow hat, black jacket, white trousers and white gloves like those he remembered from a portrait of Monticelli. The significance of Vincent's association of the color yellow with Monticelli is similar to his choice to paint yellow sunflowers in Arles. Their chromatics evoked Monticelli for him, the painter who "did the South all in yellow, all in orange, all in sulfur...I myself too have finished a picture all in yellow—of sunflowers."[62] Furthermore, in deciding to hang the sunflower paintings in Gauguin's room, Vincent was, like a sunflower himself, deferring to the higher power that he perceived in Gauguin. He may have also seen the sunflower paintings as symbolizing the mission that he sought to take on: living purely for art in a

[62] Vincent to Wil, Arles, late Sept. or first half of Oct., 1888, Van Gogh, *Complete Letters*, 3: 446.

community of like-minded painters and of forging the path for the younger generation of artists whom he were certain would follow.[63]

*The Yellow House* (F. 464) (figure 3.32) painted in late September 1888, encapsulates many of the ideas behind Vincent's pictures in which yellow plays such an essential, symbolic role. For Vincent, the yellow of the Naturalist novels, the sunflowers, and the house and its surroundings signaled hope, that which was modern, steadfast and full of promise.

**Gauguin and Vincent in Arles: The Color Yellow**

From the time of Gauguin's arrival in Arles on October 23, 1888, he and Vincent painted together on a daily basis, often from the same landscape or model. Persuaded by Gauguin, Madame Ginoux, the proprietress of the Café de la Gare, posed for the two artists in the studio of the yellow house during the first week of November. Gauguin worked on a drawing which served as the model for *Night Café*. In one sitting, as was his style, Vincent executed an oil painting of Madame Ginoux known as *The Arlésienne* (F. 489) (figure 3.33). Vincent described the picture to Theo in a letter from November 1888:

> I have an Arlésienne at last, a figure (size 30 canvas), slashed on in an hour, background pale citron, the face grey, the clothes black, black, black, with perfectly raw Prussian blue. She is leaning on a green table and seated in an armchair of orange wood.[64]

Indeed, the background is a bright yellow, made all the more intense by the contrasting black and green hues of her face and garments. About a month later in early December, Vincent made a second version of *The Arlèsienne* (F. 488) (figure 3.34). While his first

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[63] Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: Studio of the South*, 139.

[64] Vincent to Theo, Arles, November, 1888, Van Gogh, *Complete Letters*, 3:100.

version of the composition may be thought of as a study, the second has the finish of a *tableau*. The second painting achieved the decorative effects that Gauguin and Bernard prescribed in their system of Synthetism. Each area of intense color—Madame Ginoux's black dress and green-white shawl, the dark green table, the brilliant yellow wall—is painted with a distinctive texture. Vincent further intensified the contrasts in the later version of the painting. The yellow wall is more shimmering, the black dress darker, its contour more sharply delineated.

In December—likely inspired by Vincent's portrait of his mother, Anna Cornelia van Gogh-Carbentus, painted in October from a photograph—Gauguin painted a portrait of his mother from a photograph taken in her youth. Gauguin used a canvas that was identical in size to the one that Vincent had used. In its palette, *Portrait of the Artist's Mother (Aline-Marie Gauguin)* (W. 385) (figure 3.35) is informed by Vincent's portrait of Madame Ginoux. In the portrait of Aline Gauguin, a dark-haired figure in a black dress with a white shawl-neck collar is juxtaposed against a brilliant yellow background—just as in the *Arlésienne*. Gauguin initially painted the background red—his own signature color—but decided to change it to yellow—Vincent's color.

Gauguin used a gold ground in another canvas from 1888, *Little Cat (Le Petit chat)* (W. 2002, 321) (figure 3.36) painted on the coarse canvas that Gauguin obtained upon his arrival in Arles. This work was even more experimental and "Japanese" than *Still Life with Three Little Dogs*, 1888 (W. 2002, 311), another decorative composition with a vertical format, entirely lacking in perspective or shadows. The golden background in *Little Cat* is reminiscent of Japanese folding screens, and the large circular orange forms—possibly pumpkins—emanate from the painting like Chinese lanterns. From one

of Vincent's letters to Theo, we know that Gauguin was working on a similar still life in late November 1888. Vincent wrote, "Gauguin is working on…a large still life of an orange-colored pumpkin and apples and white linen on a yellow background and foreground."[65] The painting to which Vincent refers is no longer known; *Little Cat* may be a fragment of the larger canvas.[66] This hypothesis would help explain the astonishing simplification and near abstraction of this painting in which the silhouette of the black cat is the only recognizable form. Once again, in this canvas, we find the warm, luminous colors that Gauguin had discovered while working with Vincent. Years after their shared weeks in Arles, Gauguin wrote about Vincent, "Oh, yes! He loved yellow, that fine fellow Vincent, that painter from Holland: gleams of sunlight that warmed his soul. How he hated fog. He needed heat…For my part, I loved red."[67] Vincent's devotion to yellow left its mark on *Little Cats*, and yet the canvas is very much Gauguin's own, characterized by the way in which the gold and straw colored background is complimented by ochre and his beloved vermilion.

In December, as he was thinking of leaving Arles to return to Brittany, Gauguin made a portrait of Vincent. He represented the artist seated before an easel, contemplating his subject in *The Painter of Sunflowers (Le Peintre de tournesols)*, 1888 (W. 2002, 326) (figure 3.37). The image is disturbing in many ways. Vincent's head is distorted: the slope of his forehead simian, his nose flattened, his eyes nearly shut, trance-

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[65] Vincent to Theo, Arles, end of October, Van Gogh, *Complete Letters*, 3: 97.

[66] Wildenstein, *Gauguin: A Savage in the Making*, 533.

[67] Paul Gauguin, "Natures mortes," *Essais d'art libre* (January 1894): 273. "Oh! Oui, il l'aimé le jaune, ce bon Vincent, ce peintre de Hollande; lueurs de soleil qui réchauffaient son âme ; en horreur du brouillard. Un besoin de chaleur…J'adorais le rouge."

like. A disembodied, phallic left thumb protrudes through the palette, implying a sexualized undercurrent both in the act of painting and in the space of the yellow house. Tones of yellow and gold are dispersed throughout the painting: in the bouquet of sunflowers, in Vincent's hair and coat, in the rush-bottomed chair, and in a broad strip of canvas visible behind Vincent, possibly a landscape of Gauguin's. The space is cramped, Vincent crowded into the right margin of the picture plane, squeezed between Gauguin the painter and his looming canvas. The portrait conveys Gauguin's dominant role in the relationship—he literally towers over his subject—and reinforces the characterization of Vincent as unstable. The canvas also shows Gauguin appropriating Vincent's color, reshaping it to his own visual language. Yellow is crucial to the portrait, and to Gauguin's understanding of Vincent.

Gauguin recognized yellow as essential to Vincent's paintings. In a letter to Theo, Vincent emphasized the color's importance: "I make such careful calculations, and again today I found that for the ten meters of canvas I had calculated all the colors exactly except one, the fundamental yellow."[68] Furthermore, Vincent associated the color yellow with his practice of painting quickly, frenetically. He wrote to Theo on March 24, 1889: "M. Rey says that instead of eating enough and at regular times, I kept myself going on coffee and alcohol. I admit all that, but all the same it is true that to attain the high yellow note that I attained last summer, I really had to be pretty well keyed up."[69] In the months and years following his departure from Arles, in his correspondence and autobiographical writings, Gauguin retold the story of those nine weeks repeatedly, revising his

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[68] Vincent to Theo, Arles, 1888. Van Gogh, *Complete Letters*, 3: 45.

[69] Vincent to Theo, Arles, 24 March 1888. Ibid., 3: 143-144.

relationship with Vincent increasingly to suit his own ends, which entailed fashioning himself as the hero, not only of his own history, but also as the hero of modern art. Alongside his writings is Gauguin's appropriation of the color yellow first in the *Volpini Suite* and later in paintings from the first Tahitian journey.

**Gauguin's Appropriation of the Color Yellow**

Following his rupture with Vincent, Gauguin was eager to appease the van Gogh brothers. In a mollifying letter to Vincent he praised several of Vincent's paintings, including *Sower* and a Paris still life all in yellow, which he had seen in Theo's apartment. He went on to say that in his studio he had hung an impression of Vincent's lithograph, *The Potato Eaters*, given to him by Theo, alongside Vincent's *Self-Portrait*. He reiterated his esteem for the yellow-on-yellow *Sunflowers* that he felt exemplified an "essential Vincent style" and intimated that he would like to have the painting as a gift, a suggestion that was not pursued.[70]

That Gauguin described the yellow-on-yellow sunflowers as typifying that which was essentially Vincent is revealing. Gauguin perceived the personal significance of the color yellow in Vincent's oeuvre, and when he made use of it in the *Volpini Suite* and in future paintings and works on paper from the first Tahitian journey he did so knowingly, associating the color with Vincent. Vincent's yellow-on-yellow sunflower paintings in the house at Arles had made such an impression on Gauguin that he vividly recalled them in 1894:

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[70] Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: Studio of the South,* 266.

> In my yellow room,—sunflowers with purple eyes stood out on a yellow background, their stems watered from a yellow pot on a yellow table. In one corner of the picture, the signature of the painter: Vincent. And yellow sunlight came through the yellow curtains of my room, and flooded all these flower-heads with gold.[71]

With the passage of years Gauguin began to describe himself as a guide and mentor to the younger artist. Although by the time of his arrival in Arles the color yellow was a firmly established fixture in Vincent's visual language, Gauguin later suggested that it was through his guidance that Vincent had executed his powerful yellow-on-yellow works. In *Avant et Après* Gauguin re-evaluated his relationship with Vincent, characterizing Vincent as a fledgling artist to whom he had offered aid in a time of need. In the following passage Gauguin claimed to have counseled the floundering artist:

> Vincent, at the time when I arrived in Arles, was in the full current of the Neo-impressionist school, and was floundering about a good deal and suffering as a result of it…I undertook the task of enlightening him—an easy matter, for I found a rich and fertile soil. Like all original natures that are marked with the stamp of personality, Vincent had no fear of the other man and was not stubborn. From that day on my Van Gogh made astonishing progress; he seemed to divine all that he had in him, and the result was that whole series of sun-effects over sun-effects in full sunlight.
> Have you seen the portrait of the poet?
> The face and hair are chrome yellow (1).
> The clothes are chrome yellow (2).
> The necktie is chrome yellow (3) with an emerald scarf pin, on a background of chrome-yellow (4). …This is only to let you know that Van Gogh, without losing an ounce of his originality, learned a fruitful lesson from me. And every day he thanked me for it. That is what he means when he writes to M. Aurier that he owes much to Paul Gauguin.
> When I arrived at Arles, Vincent was trying to find himself, while I, who was a good deal older, was a mature man. But I owe something to Vincent, and that is, in the consciousness of having been useful to him, the confirmation of my own

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[71] Gauguin, "Natures mortes," 273. "Dans ma chambre jaune,—des fleurs de soleil, aux yeux pourpres, se détachent sur un fond jaune; elles se baignent le pied dans un pot jaune, sur une table jaune. –Dans un coin du tableau, la signature du peintre: Vincent. Et le soleil jaune, qui passe à travers les rideaux jaunes de ma chambre, inonde d'or toute cette floraison."

> original ideas about painting…When I read the remark, 'Gauguin's drawing somewhat recalls that of Van Gogh,' I smile.[72]

In actuality, I would argue that the color yellow became a central feature in Gauguin's art as a direct result of his proximity to Vincent's paintings. As has been shown, Gauguin made the *Volpini Suite* at Theo's urging just weeks after leaving Vincent in Arles. By printing the zincographs in black or brown ink on oversized sheets of canary yellow paper, Gauguin created a work of art that vibrated with energy akin to Vincent's yellow-on-yellow paintings. The size and intensity of the yellow paper lent the suite of prints a presence and import that it would not have had if he had used a more subdued paper. Gauguin's use of a garishly colored paper helped call attention to his work. After all, he intended the suite of prints to advertise his painting style and to promote his reputation.

Further allusions to Vincent may be detected within some of the imagery of the zincographs. The image of the lone fisherman in the throes of a maelstrom may refer to Vincent's despair and self-inflicted wound; the whirlpool may be read as a metaphor for Vincent's emotional instability. The strong disconnect between the sailboat on calm seas at the top of the composition and the storm raging below is parallel to the apparent joy and brilliance of Vincent's paintings from the winter of 1888, while below the surface disagreements between two artists were simmering and Vincent was becoming increasingly agitated and preoccupied by fears of Gauguin's departure.

The influence of Vincent in Gauguin's choice of yellow paper for the *Volpini Suite* is underscored by the numerous signs of the Dutch painter that materialized in Gauguin's paintings of 1889. In *Christ in the Garden of Olives (Christ au jardin des*

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[72] Gauguin, *Intimate Journals*, 10.

*Oliviers)* (W. 1964, 326) (figure 3.38) painted in June 1889, Gauguin addressed a subject that Vincent had failed twice to realize himself; Vincent had begun and destroyed two paintings of Christ in Gesthsemane. Gauguin further allied himself with the fair-complexioned, red-haired artist by portraying himself as Christ with red hair, almost usurping Vincent's place in his own paintings, as well as identifying himself with Christ.[73] Gauguin's painting seemed to imply that he was able to achieve what Vincent had not been able to do. His identification with Christ underlines his association of modern art with a kind of religion, a concept that he and Vincent had discussed in Arles when they had questioned the roles that they might play in the art of the future, wondering whether they would be its prophets, like John the Baptist, or its fulfillment, like Christ.[74]

Vincent's influence is perhaps most keenly felt in one of two breakthrough paintings made in Brittany during August 1889. The central motif of *Yellow Christ (Le Christ jaune)*, 1889 (W. 1964, 327) (figure 3.39), a yellow-on-yellow painting, is based on a polychrome crucifix in a chapel in Trémalo, a village outside of Pont-Aven. Gauguin was more concerned with the chromatic scheme and communication of symbols through color than geographical exactitude. *Sketch for "The Yellow Christ" (Etude pour "Le Christ jaune)*, 1889 (figure 3.40), a preparatory drawing on canary-yellow paper suggests the importance that color played from the painting's conception. *Yellow Christ* can be understood as Gauguin's response to Vincent's *Sower*, 1888. Both paintings used symbols of mortality—Gauguin's overtly Catholic and Vincent's metaphorical—and a

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[73] Druick and Zeghers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: Studio of the South*, 291.

[74] Ibid., 277.

palette of yellow to suggest the eternals cycles of the seasons, youth and age, and life and death.[75]

In his article "On Gauguin's Progress" written upon Gauguin's departure for Tahiti, Octave Mirbeau commented upon the palette of *Yellow Christ* and linked the painting to Vincent van Gogh. Mirbeau described the painting, "in a completely yellow countryside, an agonizing yellow…the pitiful and barbarian Christ is daubed yellow."[76] He identified the painting as "the work that begins Gauguin's series of symbolic canvases," and described the melancholy expression of Christ as one who seems to question whether his martyrdom has been useless as he looks down upon humanity. Mirbeau found the *Yellow Christ* to be expressive of Gauguin's overwhelming sorrow over Vincent van Gogh's recent death.

Together with Meyer de Haan, Gauguin decorated the walls of the inn owned by Marie Henry in Le Pouldu where the artists spent much of the later half of 1889. In *The Caribbean Woman*, 1889 (figure 3.41) Gauguin conflated the sunflowers that were so emblematic of Vincent with his own fantasies of the South Seas stimulated by the Colonial Exhibition. In this oil on panel, a dark-skinned female nude is poised against a decorative yellow background of enormous sunflowers. The figure's arms are arranged in a stylized gesture that refers to Cambodian *devatas*, the left arm raised and curved over the head, and the right hand held vertically between the breasts. In a painting that

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[75] Vincent had described *The Sower* to Bernard: "A field of ripe wheat, yellow ocher in tone with a little carmind. The sky, chrome yellow, almost as bright as the sun itself, which is chrome yellow No. 1 with a little white, whereas the rest of the sky is chrome yellow Nos. 1 and 2 mixed. So very yellow." Van Gogh, *The Complete Letters*, 3:491.

[76] Octave Mirbeau, "On Gauguin's Progress," *L'Echo de Paris* (16 Feb. 1891), translated in Marla Prather and Charles F. Stuckey, eds, *Gauguin: A Retrospective* (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1987) 136-147.

Gauguin intended to advertise the direction of modern painting, he brought together his and Vincent's symbols of the art of the future, articulated once again in a primarily yellow palette.

Gauguin and Vincent were both extremely sensitive to color and believed that color acted directly upon the soul. In different ways, each sought to use color as evocatively as possible in their paintings. For Gauguin, color's suggestive power was profound; he believed that it stimulated the imagination and could act as a portal into the infinite. In "Diverse choses," he wrote:

> Color being enigmatic in itself, as to the sensations it gives us, then to be logical we cannot use it any other way than enigmatically every time we use it, not to draw with but rather to give the musical sensations that flow from it, from its own nature, from its internal, mysterious, enigmatic power. By means of skillful harmonies we create symbols. Color which, like music is a matter of vibrations, reaches what is most general and therefore most undefinable in nature: its inner power.[77]

Gauguin's use of canary yellow paper in the *Volpini Suite* is parallel to his use of the color in his paintings of 1888 and 1889. Influenced by Japanese art, popular posters and advertisements, a burgeoning array of choices in book manufacture, and Vincent's use of the color yellow, Gauguin appropriated the color and used it to his own ends in 1889 with the *Volpini Suite*. The black ink designs vibrate on the yellow sheets, creating a powerful effect that achieved precisely what Gauguin intended.

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[77] Daniel Guérin, ed., *Paul Gauguin: The Writings of a Savage*, trans. Eleanor Levieux (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 145.

**Chapter Four: Emile Bernard and Paul Gauguin**

In discussing the *Volpini Suite*, it is essential to take into consideration Emile Bernard's suite of zincographs *Les Bretonneries*, also made in Paris during the winter of 1889. The critical issue when discussing Gauguin and Bernard is that of contested authorship. The literature on Bernard has been dominated by arguments supporting Bernard's role in the development of Gauguin's style. Authors have felt compelled to defend Bernard's originality, and have often relied heavily on his self-aggrandizing memoir, *L'Aventure de ma vie*.[1] The history of modern art and its evolution is full of such parings at critical junctures; in fact, such dialogues seem to be an essential component of the development of modern art.[2] In this chapter, I will try to even-handedly examine the evidence of the two artists' work and writings, and will focus on a close comparison of the technique and subject matter in the *Volpini Suite* and *Les Bretonneries*—an analysis that has not been made previously.[3]

Bernard's familiarity with printmaking may have initially prompted Gauguin to explore zincography. The two artists met in Pont-Aven in 1886 and worked closely

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[1] For example see Fred Leeman, "Réussite, et destin d'Emile Bernard," *Emile Bernard 1868-1941 Rétrospective* (Paris: Fondation Mona Bismarck, 1991), 9-12; and Rodolphe Rapetti, "L'Invention du symbolisme: Paul Gauguin, Emile Bernard, G.-Albert Aurier," *Symbole in der Kunst* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2002), 135-149. The full text of Bernard's *L'Aventure de ma vie* remains unpublished. The manuscript is in the collection of the Cabinet de dessins at the Musée du Louvre. Excerpts from *L'Aventure de ma vie* are published as a forward in Pierre Cailler, ed., *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Emile Bernard* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1954), 11-47.

[2] Consider the dialogues between Paul Signac and Henri Matisse, as well as between Pablo Picasso and Julio Gonzales.

[3] Caroline Boyle-Turner makes numerous interesting comparisons between Bernard and Gauguin's prints, but I will carry the discussion further in this chapter. See Caroline Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin & his Circle in Brittany* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986).

together, exchanging ideas until the break in their friendship in 1891 just prior to Gauguin's departure for Tahiti, by which time it was clear that Gauguin was being credited as the leader of the Pont-Aven School and as the initiator of Synthetism. Bernard had begun experimenting with lithography and zincography in 1887 and during the period of their most intense collaboration he likely encouraged Gauguin to try the techniques. In this discussion, I will examine the influence that the artists' paintings, prints and drawings exerted upon one another during the months leading up to the creation of the two artists' print portfolios. Although the comparison between Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon* and Bernard's *Breton Women in the Meadow* has frequently been made, I will discuss the paintings as precursors to the print portfolios.

**Emile Bernard's Ambitions**

A brief examination of Bernard's early artistic career is helpful in establishing the scope of his ambitions and his life-long quest to establish his persona as a precocious, inspired artist who formulated the ideas that he claimed Gauguin took credit for. Only by addressing Bernard's grandiose assertions is it possible to separate truth from fiction and to attempt to assess the mutual influence that he and Gauguin exerted upon one another's prints. *L'Aventure de ma vie,* written toward the end of Bernard's life, is full of misremembrances and reinventions of the past, and as a historical document it is completely unreliable. To complicate matters, Bernard frequently added dates to his works much after the fact, so even the artist's inscriptions must be questioned.

At the age of sixteen, Bernard began studying in the atelier of Fernand Cormon, where he met and befriended Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Louis Anquetin. One may

surmise that the young artist's rebellious nature and insubordinate behavior were the causes of his expulsion from the studio in the early spring of 1886. Bernard did not relay the details of his dismissal in his autobiography, but, in his memoirs, the artist Archibald Standish Hartrick recalled that Bernard's banishment was the result of his insistence upon the expressive use of color:

> Cormon came round one morning, as usual, to find Bernard painting the old brown sail that served as a background to the model in alternate streaks of vermillion and vert veronese. On asking the youth what he was doing, Bernard replied, "that he saw it that way." Thereupon, Cormon announced that if that was the case, he had better go and see things that way somewhere else. In light of later experiences this action was not so outrageous as might appear to the uninitiated. It was quite a common thing to make a flesh-grey by mixing these two colors together on the palette; very bad chemically, no doubt. Bernard was religiously carrying out the experiment on the theory that, put down side by side in spots or streaks, these colors at a distance would combine and make a grey to the eye. But immediately "the fat was in the fire." Someone, I forget whom, told Cormon that he was an old Academician, hidebound with prejudice, and that he was interfering with genius in the bud. In sort, there was a great uproar about little—a disturbance of the sort that could only happen in a studio in Paris. Cormon closed down the studio at once for some months, and all the more aggressive students were sent away. During this period, the story goes that Vincent, full of indignation, took this interference with the free expression of the artist so much to heart that he went round with a pistol to shoot Cormon, but, fortunately, did not find him in.[4]

The self-confidence that Bernard displayed early on—perhaps combined with the encouragement of peers such as Vincent van Gogh—later led him to insist upon authorship of the ideas that he and Gauguin developed together in Pont-Aven in 1888. In 1886, with an independent spirit and youthful energy, Bernard had set out on a six-month "voyage à pied" through Normandy and Brittany. He developed an immediate affinity for the region's landscapes, architecture, culture and religion. His paintings of the 1880s and

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[4] See Archibald Standish Hartrick, *A Painter's Pilgrimage through Fifty Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 42-43. For more on Hartrick's relationships with Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh, see Martin Bailey, "Memories of Van Gogh and Gauguin: Hartrick's reminiscences," *Van Gogh Museum Journal* (2001): 97-105.

*Les Bretonneries* would celebrate his fondness for the region. His expulsion from Cormon's studio and his independent "voyage à pied" reveal Bernard's open-minded, experimental approach to art. He had the courage, and perhaps the audacity, to explore and embrace whatever the establishment had deemed officially unacceptable, whether it was Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, ukiyo-e prints, or Medieval and Byzantine art.

Bernard's intellect, ability to articulate complex artistic ideas, and ambition were clear by 1890, by which time he had already published two articles, "Au Palais des beaux-arts, notes sur la peinture" and "Paul Cézanne."[5] The second publication appeared in the form of a booklet rather than in a newspaper or periodical. In 1878, the book dealer Léon Vanier—who was to become the publisher of avant-garde writers of the 1880s such as Verlaine, Laforgue, Moréas, and Huysmans—began publishing a small series of biographical portraits of important men of the day. Each fascicle of *Les Hommes d'aujuord'hui* was devoted to a prominent person whose portrait was reproduced on the cover. The biographical text was no longer than three pages. A further testament to the young artist's self-confidence that verged on arrogance appeared in 1891. At the age of only twenty-four, Bernard suggested that Schuffenecker write a brief biography of him for *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui,* and he provided Schuffenecker with accounts of his childhood and youth. The project never came to fruition, however, and such a text was never published.

The Volpini exhibition was not the first occasion upon which Bernard's work was publicly displayed, even though he was only twenty-one in 1889. During the winter of 1886-87 he showed pointillist paintings in an exhibition at Asnières, and he showed his

[5] "Au Palais des beaux-arts, Notes sur la peinture," *Le Moderniste illustré*, July 1889, and "Paul Cézanne," *Les Hommes d'Aujourd'hui*, vol. 8 no. 390 (1890).

work twice in Paris in 1887: at Père Tanguy's he showed recent Breton paintings, and at the Grand Bouillon he exhibited alongside Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Anquetin.[6]

Bernard's precocious nature was evident in his early attraction to art and literature. In his youth, he copied from prints by Honoré Daumier and Gustave Doré. His favorite artist was Puvis de Chavannes. While still at school, he claimed to have developed an appreciation for Baudelaire, Hugo, Poe and Zola. Even before his first trip to Brittany in 1886, he was already familiar with the Symbolist poetry of Jean Morèas and Stéphane Mallarmé, and he was writing his own poetry before he was twenty.[7]

**The Meeting of Gauguin and Bernard**

Vincent van Gogh played a pivotal role in initiating the relationship of Gauguin and Bernard. While the dates are uncertain, Bernard likely met Vincent before being expelled from Cormon's atelier. During the spring of 1886, Vincent, recently arrived in Paris from Holland and, living with his brother Theo, attended Cormon's atelier for a few months. Bernard and Vincent became close friends in 1887, when Bernard became a part of the group of "peintres du petit boulevard" that Vincent was trying to organize as a counterpart to the Impressionists of the "grands boulevards."[8] Bernard remained in Paris after Vincent and Gauguin left for Arles and Pont-Aven respectively in mid-February 1888. Upon Vincent's urging, he traveled to Brittany in mid-August with the hope of renewing a relationship with Gauguin. Bernard had encountered Gauguin in 1886 in

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[6] Mary Anne Stevens ed., *Emile Bernard 1868-1941: A Pioneer of Modern Art* (Amsterdam; Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum; Waanders Publishing, 1990), 22.

[7] Ibid., 17.

[8] Ibid., 49.

Pont-Aven, but their first meeting was unremarkable; neither artist saw any of the other's works.

In a frequently quoted letter, Gauguin wrote to Schuffenecker of the promising young Bernard: "I have started a pupil who will go far: the circle grows. Little Bernard is here and has brought interesting things back from St-Briac. Here is one who is not afraid of anything."[9] It is clear that by the summer of 1888, Gauguin recognized Bernard's confidence, determination, and precocious nature. Letters by both artists to Vincent van Gogh reveal an enthusiastic exchange of ideas and a burgeoning mutual respect. It was during this period of two months during the autumn of 1888 that both artists executed some of their most original paintings to date, particularly Bernard's *Breton Women in the Meadow* (figure 4.1), and Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon* (figure 4.2).

**Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon* and Bernard's *Breton Women in a Meadow***

Every undergraduate course in Pont-Impressionism includes a comparison of Bernard's *Breton Women in a Meadow* and Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon*; however because these two paintings immediately preceded the two artists' portfolios of zincographs, it is important to review the relationship between the two paintings, and to explore the ways in which they inform the prints.

The precise dating of the two pictures has been the subject of debate among scholars. Both canvases were executed during the late summer/early autumn of 1888. In a letter to Vincent van Gogh, Gauguin included a sketch of the composition, making it

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[9] Gauguin to Schuffenecker, 14 August 1888, Paul Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends,*ed. Maurice Malingue, trans. Henry J. Stenning (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 100.

clear that the painting was near completion by September 25-27, 1888. Gauguin described the picture in some detail to Vincent, knowing that his explanation would be passed along to Theo:

> I have just painted a religious picture, very clumsily but it interested me and I like it. I wanted to give it to the church of Pont-Aven. Naturally they don't want it. A group of Breton women are praying, their costumes a very intense black. The bonnets a very luminous yellowy-white. The two bonnets to the right are like monstrous helmets. An apple tree cuts across the canvas, dark purple with its foliage drawn in masses like emerald green clouds with greenish yellow chinks of sunlight. The ground (pure vermillion). In the church it darkens and becomes a browny red. The Angel is dressed in violent ultramarine blue and Jacob in bottle green. The angel's wings are pure chrome yellow. 1. The angel's hair chrome 2 and the feet flesh orange. I think I have achieved in the figures a great simplicity, rustic and superstitious. The whole thing is very severe. The cow under the tree is very small in comparison with reality and rearing up. For me in this picture the landscape and the struggle exist only in the imagination of the people praying owing to the sermon which is why there is contrast between the life-size people and the struggle in its non-natural, disproportionate landscape.[10]

Gauguin immediately recognized the significance of his canvas. It initiated both a new style and subject matter for the artist who at the time was pushing himself to articulate something new and highly personal in his work. The canvas was a point of departure for the heightened use of color in his work, and the first composition in which he directly

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[10] Gauguin to Vincent van Gogh, c. 25-7 September 1888, Paul Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin (1873-1888)*, ed. Victor Merlhès (Paris, 1984), 230-2. "Je viens de faire un tableau religieux très mal fait mais qui m'a intéressé à faire et qui me plaît. Je voulais le donner à l'église de Pont-Aven. Naturallement on n'en veut pas. Des Bretonnes groupées prient costumes noir très intense. Les bonnets blancs jaunes très lumineux. Les deux bonnets à droite sont comme des casques monstreux. Un *pommier* traverse la toile violet sombre et le feuillage dessiné par masses commes des nuages vert *émeraude* avec les *interstises* vert jaune de soleil. Le terrain *vermillion pur*. A l'église il descend et devient brun rouge. L'ange est habillé de bleu outremer violent et Jacob vert bouteille. Les ailes de l'ange jaune de chrome 1 pur. Les cheveux de l'ange chrome 2 et les pieds chair orange. Je crois avoir atteint dans les figures une grande simplicité rustique et *superstitieuse*. Le tout très sévère. La vache sous l'arbre est toute petite par rapport à la vérité et se cabre. Pour moi dans ce tableau le paysage et la lutte n'existent que dans l'imagination des gens en prière par suite du sermon c'est pourquoi il y a contraste entre les gens nature et la lutte dans son paysage non nature et disproportionnée."

addressed the question of religious faith—a theme that continued in his art and writing throughout the remainder of his life.

Gauguin's canvas—and one might argue the same of much of his work dating from 1888-89—cannot been seen accurately without the comparison to Bernard's contemporaneous paintings. Bernard claimed that his canvas, alternately titled *Breton Women in a Meadow* or *Pardon at Pont-Aven*, was inspired by a fête in Pont-Aven. Such a fête may have been the Feast of the Assumption on 15 August which coincided with the feast day of Marie-Jeanne Gloanec.[11] Or, as Bernard himself claimed, it may have celebrated the Pardon of Pont-Aven on 16 September. In any case, as Gauguin's canvas was apparently nearly complete by the time the artist wrote to Vincent van Gogh in late September, it is possible that Gauguin and Bernard worked on their canvases simultaneously, or that Gauguin began his canvas first and adjusted it slightly after seeing Bernard's.[12] Only one preparatory drawing for *Vision of the Sermon* exists in the Walter sketchbook at the Musée du Louvre, and although some drying time would have been necessary between the paint layers, a technical examination of the painting reveals that the canvas was executed fluidly with few hesitations or changes.[13]

The issue of which canvas was executed first would be of little relevance were it not for Bernard's later claim that Gauguin essentially painted *Vision of the Sermon* in

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[11] Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), 300.

[12] Belinda Thomson suggests both possibilities. See Belinda Thomson, *Gauguin's Vision* (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 2005), 53.

[13] For a technical analysis of the painting, see Lesley Stevenson, "Gauguin's Vision: A Discussion of Materials and Technique," *Gauguin's Vision* (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 2005), 111-119.

response to his own *Breton Women in a Meadow*. The question of mutual influence between these two paintings is significant to the discussion of the artists' series of zincographs, executed just a few months after these two canvases. In *Breton Women in a Meadow*, Breton rendered a frieze-like arrangement of Breton women without perspective against a monochromatic field of acid-green. His boldest Cloissonist statement thus far, each figure was outlined with a heavy black line against the yellow-green background, achieving an effect akin to stained glass. Bernard's theory of color was based on the notion of purity; *Breton Women in a Meadow* was executed in accordance with his belief that only unadulterated color preserved each color's internal vigor. By surrounding passages of undiluted color with a blue-black border, he sought to enhance the strength of each color in the composition. By hand-coloring his zincographs that were printed in black ink, Bernard approached a similar effect in *Les Bretonneries* that he was achieving in his contemporary paintings. In *Breton Women in a Meadow* each hue was applied without shading or transition. Although the painting is of modest size, the flatness of the colors combined with the complete disregard for perspective creates an illusion of monumentality. Just as it evoked medieval enamels and stained glass, the picture simultaneously invoked the more contemporary sources that captivated Bernard and Gauguin at the time such as Japanese woodcuts, primitive Breton sculpture, and Epinal prints.

Griselda Pollock has argued that artists of the late 1880s had the challenge of producing works of art that demonstrated their knowledge of the avant-garde, and subtly referred and deferred to what was current, while at the same time, creating art that

signaled progress and thus originality.[14] While *Breton Women in a Meadow* is not a completely successful painting—the scale of the figures is confusing, the space is completely unreconciled, and the faces frequently descend into caricature—it shows that Bernard was very much aware of the art of his time, and that he was self-consciously forging new ground. In an article on Gauguin and Bernard—the first in-depth study of the artists' collaboration—Henri Dorra suggested that while Gauguin was clearly the truly creative artist, Bernard seems to have had a gift for articulating abstract theories.[15] I would agree with this, suggesting that Bernard's talent lay in his ability as a theorist rather than as an artist. Bernard seems to have given Gauguin the language through which to express the ideas that he was working toward in his art.

When he and Gauguin began working together in earnest in Pont-Aven in 1888, Bernard idolized the artist as his master. In the autumn of 1888, Vincent told Theo of Bernard's burgeoning respect for Gauguin:

> His [Bernard's] letter is steeped in admiration for Gauguin's talent. He says that he thinks him so great an artist that he is almost afraid, and that he finds everything that he does himself poor in comparison with Gauguin. And you know that last winter Bernard was always picking quarrels with Gauguin.[16]

As Vincent was to discover for himself, however, Gauguin's relationships with other artists—particularly those whose talents he considered formidable—were seldom straightforward. In a matter of three years, Bernard's attitude toward Gauguin underwent a complete and irrevocable reversal. Bernard maintained that he had played the

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[14] Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 16.

[15] Henri Dorra, "Emile Bernard and Paul Gauguin," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 45 (1955): 238.

[16] Vincent to Theo, 18 September 1888 (letter 539), Vincent van Gogh, *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, trans. Johanna van Gogh-Bonger and C. de Dood. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958), 3:43.

pioneering role in the development of Synthetism, and that Gauguin was little more than an unscrupulous crook, guilty of taking credit for ideas that he had formulated. Throughout his life, Bernard returned to the subject in a series of articles launched against Gauguin. In his autobiography, Bernard claimed that he presented *Breton Women in a Meadow* to Gauguin as a technical demonstration of his ideas, particularly with regards to his use of pure colors. According to Bernard, in *Vision of the Sermon* Gauguin sought to:

> …demonstrate the same thing for himself and borrowed from me certain colors which I had used, like Prussian blue, which had been banished from the Impressionist palette, and which he did not possess. So he executed the *Vision of the Sermon* which earned him the title of "creator of symbolism." Now all he had done was put into practice not the color theory of which I had spoken to him, but the very style of my *Breton Women in the Meadow*, having first deliberately established a background of red instead of yellow green as mine was. In the foreground he placed the same large figures with their monumental chatelaines' headdresses. He was so pleased with his canvas that he continued to pursue the direction it opened up for him and definitively abandoned the divisionism he had learned from Pissarro.[17]

Bernard's claim that he painted *Breton Women* before Gauguin began his *Vision of the Sermon* parallels his claim that *Les Bretonneries* had a profound effect on Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*.

Bernard's later claim that he was essentially Gauguin's tutor is highly questionable. It contradicts not only the younger artist's acknowledged appreciation of

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[17] Paul Gauguin, *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Emile Bernard*, ed. Pierre Cailler (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 19540, 26-27. "Il voulut se le démontrer à lui-même et m'emprunta quelques couleurs dont je m'étais servi, comme le bleu de Prusse, chassé de la palette impressionniste, et qu'il n'avait pas. Il exécuta alors cette toile de la *Vision du Sermon* qui lui valut le titre de 'créateur du symbolisme.' Or il n'avait fait que mettre en action non théorie colorée dont je lui avais, parlé, mais le propre style de mes *Bretonnes dans la prairie*, après avoir établi un fond de parti pris rouge, au lieu de jaune vert, comme l'était le mien. Au premier plan il mit les mêmes grandes figures aux bonnets monumentaux de châtelaines. Il fut si heureux de sa toile qu'il poursuivit ensuite dans la voie qu'elle lui ouvrait et abandonnait définitivement le divisionnisme qu'il tenait de Pissarro."

Gauguin at the time, but also the role that Gauguin had carefully designed for himself in Pont-Aven as leader of a new school of painting, surrounded by a group of admiring artists half his age. Belinda Thomson offers an insightful analysis of what transpired between the two artists in August-September 1888.[18] Gauguin always utilized a rich array of sources in his art, recombining them in a highly personal distillation. It was completely in keeping with his working practices to give visual form to the ideas that he and Bernard were hashing out in *Vision of the Sermon*. During the summer of 1888, they gave one another the courage and support to go further than either of them had before—to utilize a more intense palette, greater simplification, more daring compositions. Bernard in particular, created the best work of his career during this period, and his accusations of Gauguin's reckless plagiarism are doubtless exaggerated.[19] Vincent astutely summarized the artist's relationship, "They are enjoying themselves very much, painting, arguing…he [Gauguin] speaks well of Bernard's work, and Bernard speaks well of Gauguin's."[20]

The solidity of Gauguin's and Bernard's friendship in 1888 is attested to by the fact that Bernard was responsible for transporting *Vision of the Sermon* to Theo van Gogh in Paris, and that Gauguin was entrusted with the transportation of Bernard's canvas to Arles. That Gauguin bothered to bring the painting with him acknowledges his regard for the picture's importance.

Vincent responded enthusiastically to it, writing to his sister, Wil:

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[18] Thomson, *Gauguin's Vision*, 57-59.

[19] Ibid., 58.

[20] Vincent to Theo, c. 21 August 1888 (letter 526), Van Gogh, *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, 3:18.

> You ask me who Bernard is—he is a young painter—he is certainly not older than twenty—very original. He is trying to do elegant modern figures in the manner of ancient Greek and Egyptian art, a gracefulness in the expressive motions, a charm in consequence of the daring colors. I saw a picture of his of a Sunday afternoon in Brittany, Breton peasant women, children, peasants, dogs strolling about in a very green meadow; the clothes are black and red, and the women's caps white. But in this crowd there are also two ladies, one dressed in red, the other in bottle green; they make it a very modern thing…Ask Theo to show you the water color that I made after this picture; it is so original that I wanted to have a copy of it.[21]

Although Vincent did not directly name Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grand Jatte*, 1884-86, I believe the fact that he described Bernard's painting as a "Sunday afternoon in Brittany," and that he compared Bernard's figures those in Egyptian art makes clear that he recognized the connection between Bernard's and Seurat's paintings. Curiously, art historians have never focused on this comparison, despite the vast amount of literature that Seurat's painting has inspired. Why, one might ask, is this important? I would argue that Bernard and Gauguin's canvases were painted in reaction against Seurat's *Grande Jatte*, and that subsequently they used their print portfolios to advertise their separation from Neo-Impressionism. Bernard alluded to Seurat's famous picture in *Breton Women in a Meadow* simultaneously attempting to surpass Seurat's canvas in daring and innovation. At the time of the first exhibition of Seurat's painting, Bernard was an eighteen-year-old art student in Paris. Seurat's picture gained instant notoriety. The painting—and in turn the artist—made a scandalous break with Impressionism and deliberately challenged its first practitioners. Bernard's *Breton Women in a Meadow* as well as Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon* responded to Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on theIsland of La Grande Jatte* and challenged the Neo-Impressionists. In a contest of one-upmanship, of who could most radically depart from

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[21] Vincent to Wil, St. Rémy, November 1889 (letter W. 16), Ibid., 3:462.

Impressionism while still maintaining the support of some of its key members, Bernard and Gauguin set out to make paintings that would be as revolutionary as the *La Grande Jatte*. I have discussed Gauguin's competition with Seurat as part of the motivation that that lay behind his organization of the Volpini Exhibition in Chapter One. One aspect of Gauguin and Bernard's meeting of minds was in their mutual alliance against Neo-Impressionism and Seurat.

**Emile Bernard as Printmaker**

Alongside Vincent van Gogh's reprisal of *The Potato Eaters*, 1885 (F. 82) into a print, Bernard's interest in prints may have spurred Gauguin's aspirations to reinterpret several of his compositions in a graphic format.[22] Rather than attempting to emulate the *belle épreuve*, or beautifully executed and meticulously printed etching that was popular throughout the mid-nineteenth century, Bernard was drawn to the medium of zincography in which pen, brush or crayon with special water-repellent inks were employed to create designs on zinc plates in the same manner as freely executed drawings. Zincographs are characterized by unusual patterns created by the ink on the metal plates, a propensity for the plates to oxidize and show grease marks and fingerprints, and an unpredictability of the ink washes. These irregularities appealed to Bernard as they did to Gauguin; spontaneity and uniqueness were their central concerns.

[22] Caroline Boyle-Turner has suggested that Bernard may have initiated Gauguin's interest in printmaking; Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School,* 36. Although Bernard made his first zincographs two years before the *Volpini Suite* and *Les Bretonneries* were executed, there is, however, no definitive proof to assert whether Bernard influenced Gauguin's decision to begin making prints.

Establishing a coherent chronology for Bernard's prints is difficult. The artist often backdated his own works and added misleading inscriptions long after their production, such as "mon premier bois" ("my first woodcut"), which appears on several compositions. Although many prints are dated by hand, a few were dated in the block, and these have been used to suggest a chronology for the others.[23] As a very young artist, Bernard shifted style and subject matter frequently in the late 1880s. One print accepted as circa 1887 reveals his interest in the theme of the café-concert. In *The Singer (La Chanteuse)* (figure 4.4), the exaggerated hourglass figure of a singer outlined in black is central to the composition. Surrounding her on stage are other female performers while members of a male audience populate the foreground. The composition simultaneously evokes the influence of Seurat's *La Parade*, 1887-1888 (figure 4.5) exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in the spring of 1888, and of Degas's images of the café concert, such as his lithograph *Miss Bécat at the Ambassadors (Mademoiselle Bécat aux Ambassadeurs)*, 1877-78 (Reed & Shapiro 31) (figure 4.6). Bernard's primary concern in *The Singer* was to convey the drama and mystery of gaslight—a favorite theme among his Parisian contemporaries. Bernard's interest in experimentation is revealed by several states of *The Singer* collected by the Foundation Doucet. In one early state, he experimented with three different positions of the central figure's arms and highlighted her arms, legs and the gas lamps by wiping the plate and scratching white lines through the black ink. In another version, he hand-colored the central and foreground figures in pale chalk. The final state of *The Singer* is flatter and more simplified than the earlier state. Unfortunately, interesting details and surface texture were eliminated, creating a

[23] Caroline Boyle-Turner, "Emile Bernard as Experimental Printmaker," Stevens, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941: A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 250.

stiff and forced composition. Bernard's interest in the café-concert was short-lived; he quickly became occupied with the linear rhythms, flat patterns, and the Breton subject matter characteristic of Synthetism.

**Bernard's *Les Bretonneries***

It is difficult to determine how much time Bernard and Gauguin spent together in Paris during the weeks following Gauguin's return from Arles and before his departure for Pont-Aven. It is also impossible to definitively ascertain whether or how much the two artists witnessed one another's progress on their respective print portfolios. We know that Gauguin made the *Volpini Suite* during January and February 1889. Bernard claimed that the two artists worked separately, but that after seeing the mottled effects that he had achieved by mixing ink and water in *Les Bretonneries*, Gauguin went back to his studio and executed two more prints.[24] Such a claim is highly unlikely given that Gauguin attained a more complex range of textures in nearly every composition of the *Volpini Suite* than Bernard did in *Les Bretonneries*.

Bernard may have begun *Les Bretonneries* before Gauguin began the *Volpini Suite*. According to Daniel Morane, Bernard began making preparatory drawings for *Les Bretonneries* at the end of 1888 while Gauguin was still in Arles, and finished working on the prints in the early months of 1889.[25]

Whereas Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* is comprised of a variety of subjects, some original and some related to previous paintings, Bernard's series of zincographs is more

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[24] Emile Bernard, "L'Aventure de ma vie," unpublished manuscript, Musée du Louvre, 79.

[25] Daniel Morane, *Emile Bernard, Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre gravé* (Pont-Aven, Musée de Pont-Aven, 2000), 19.

unified. Bernard's portfolio describes an idealized vision of the daily life of Breton women, unrealistically dressed in traditional festival costume while engaged in the rural work of the locale. In fact, Breton women never wore the *coiffe* and stiff white collar while working in the fields or tending livestock, but covered their hair with simple cylindrical caps while working outside. The *coiffes* were reserved for special occasions. Bernard, Gauguin and their Parisian colleagues romanticized the rural Breton population and their customs, ignoring the increasing industrialization of Brittany. For them, Pont-Aven survived as a remnant of the Middle Ages where time essentially stood still. In *Les Bretonneries*, Bernard did not directly refer to any of his paintings; as Morane suggests, they are likely based on drawings made in Pont-Aven, or were composed spontaneously from memory. Indeed, numerous similarities in motifs and compositions may be found when comparing Bernard's prints from *Les Bretonneries* and his drawings from the same period.

Is unclear how many prints Bernard intended to include in *Les Bretonneries*. Within his graphic oeuvre, there exist ten zincographs of similar size depicting Breton subject matter, any of which may have been included in the portfolio.[26] According to the artist, none of his albums were sold at the Volpini exhibition. Some of the prints from the Bretonneries series were later discovered in the collections of some of Bernard's friends such as Charles Filiger, Paul Sérusier, and Andreas Bonger (Theo van Gogh's brother-in-

[26] Bernard's ten zincographs of Breton subjects include: *Bretonneries: Title Page (Bretonneries: page de titre)* (Morane 9); *Return from the Pardon (Le Retour du pardon)* (M. 10); *Breton Women Hanging the Laundry (Bretonnes étendant le linge)* (M. 11); *Breton Women Making Haystacks (Bretonnes faisant les foins)* (M. 12); *Breton Women Feeding Pigs (Bretonnes nourrissant les couchons)* (M. 13); *Harvest (Le Moissonneur)* (M. 14); *Breton Marriage (La Noce en Bretagne)* (M. 15); *Bretons Harvesting (Bretonnes faisant la mouisson)* (M. 16); La *The Apple Picker (Cueillette des pommes)* (M. 17); *Breton Landscape (Paysage bretonne)* (M. 18). Ibid., 19-35.

law), and were likely given as gifts by Bernard. Curiously, none of the assembled portfolios contain precisely the same set of images. When giving away his prints, Bernard selected different images according to the occasion. Thus, the portfolio did not have a fixed identity as did the eleven images of Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*.

Many years after the production of *Les Bretonneries*, upon the occasion of giving a suite away, Bernard wrote the following inscription:

> The album of Bretonneries is composed of six plates: 1. *Bretonneries and a Cow*; 2. *The Clothes Line*; 3. *The Haystacks*; 4. *On the Aven*; 5. *The Dance*; 6. *The Pigs*. Also, independent plates: 1. *The Apples*; 2. *The Harvesters*; 3. *Young Woma*n with a Jug.[27]

The identity of the recipient of the portfolio is unknown, as the name has faded beyond recognition. In the inscription dated 17 May 1936, Bernard indicates that he was responsible for the hand coloring, that he composed all of the lithographs in Brittany and that they were pulled in an edition of twenty-five in 1889. The three "independent plates" could be included in the series or not, according to the recipient, or to Bernard's decision. Given the scarcity of the prints today, however, it is unlikely that the edition of twenty-five was achieved. It is more likely Bernard pulled the plates himself, or had them printed as needed. His claim of having done all of the hand-coloring himself should also be questioned; he may have enlisted his wife or children to hand-color impressions as needed.

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[27] Ibid., 19. "L'album des Bretonneries se compose de six planches 1. *Bretonnes et vache*, 2. *Le linge*, 3. *Les foins*, 4. *Sur l'Aven*, 5. *Danses (unique épreuve),* 6. *Les porcs (épreuve d'etat)* Autres planches indépendantes 1. *Les pommes*, 2. *Les faucheurs*, 3. *Jeune fille à la cruche.*" This portfolio belongs to the collection of the Bibliothèque d'art et d'archeologie Jacques Doucet, Paris.

Spurred by increasing religious fervor and a desire to be closer to the seat of Christianity, in 1893 Bernard traveled to Italy and thereafter to Egypt where he lived until 1904. In November 1895, he wrote to his mother asking her to send the zinc plates for *Les Bretonneries* to Cairo so that he could re-print them. On three sheets of paper, Bernard printed Breton subjects and one Parisian subject: The title page from *Les Bretonneries, Return from the Pardon (Le Retour du pardon)* (figure 4.7); *Wedding in Brittany (La Noce en Bretagne)*; *Breton Women Making Haystacks (Bretonnes faisant les foins)* (figure 4.8); *The Singer (La Chanteuse)* and *Breton Women Gathering in the Harvest (Bretonnes faisant le moisson)* (figure 4.9). [28] The following year, Bernard brought the impressions with him to Spain and dedicated them to the Spanish artist, Ignacio Zuloaga with the inscription "Séville 1897." This is apparently the last time that the plates were printed. Other impressions have survived uncolored. A set that belonged to Charles Filiger is now in the Musée des beaux-arts, Quimper. The Van Gogh Museum has three images from the Bretonneries: two impressions of *Return from the Pardon,* one hand-colored and one without hand-coloring; and impressions of *Harvest* and *Women Making Haystacks*, both without hand-coloring.

Whereas Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* was printed in black or brown ink on canary yellow paper and hand-colored in only a few instances, many of the surviving impressions of *Les Bretonneries* are uniquely hand-colored. There are eight of Bernard's hand-colored prints from *Les Bretonneries* in the Bibliothèque d'art et d'archeologie Jacques Doucet, Paris, and there is a set of seven hand-colored prints in the Städtische Kunsthalle in Mannheim. Some impressions are so extensively hand-colored that the

[28] These impressions are in the collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art.

printed line has almost been obscured. Bernard often used color in *Les Bretonneries* to differentiate one form from another. Whereas Gauguin's zincographs in the *Volpini Suite* were fully realized enough to be legible without hand-coloring, Bernard relied more heavily on color to distinguish form and meaning. However, the hand-coloring often obscures the delicate textures created by the use of lavis, or tusche.

Color lithography was readily available by 1889, but Bernard never utilized this process. He may have objected to color lithography's commercial connotations, its technical complexity, or it simply may have been too expensive, ambitious, and difficult for him to have considered undertaking. Color lithography would have necessitated the skills of a professional printer which would have been beyond Bernard's means at the time. The possibility of producing more obviously "hand-made" prints in which each impression was uniquely hand-colored, on the other hand, would have appealed to Bernard's experimental nature. The amateurish manner in which *Les Bretonneries* was printed and the cheap paper that he used suggests to me that he printed the zincographs himself, perhaps with minimal assistance of a professional whose press he was utilizing.[29] Morane suggests that the rough quality of printing and the poor paper in *Les Bretonneries* indicates that Bernard's series was not printed by Gauguin's printer Ancourt. The flimsy paper is hardly able to support without buckling the watercolor that Bernard used to hand-color his prints, and traces of blue-grey paper remaining on the reverse of several of the hand-colored impressions suggests that at one time they were laid down to a heavier

[29] Caroline Boyle-Tuner suggests that a professional printer—possibly Ancourt—was responsible for printing *Les Bretonneries*; Boyle-Turner, *Prints of the Pont-Aven School*, 36. I have not found evidence to support this, however, and would argue instead that Bernard's prints were not printed by a professional printer—and certainly not by Ancourt who was known to be the most highly skilled lithographic printer working in Paris at the time.

sheet, probably while being colored.[30] The hand-coloring may even have been an after-thought; indeed, it is impossible to know precisely when each impression was hand-colored; they may have been colored long after they were printed.[31] Bernard's extensive manipulation of many impressions of *Les Bretonneries* with watercolor repeated the way that he was to hand-color his woodcuts in subsequent years.

Bernard appears to have drawn directly onto the zinc plates in *Les Bretonneries*. At times he made mistakes—such as in the arm and hand of the foreground figure in *Women Hanging the Laundry* (*Femmes étendant du linge)* (figure 4.10)—but he did not obliterate such modifications. In both the prints and the paintings of his Breton period Bernard achieved a similar naiveté.

While Bernard's and Gauguin's series each has its own distinct character, there exist numerous compositional similarities between the two, suggesting that the artists may have been aware of one another's progress. The overall compositions of Bernard's *Women Hanging Laundry* and Gauguin's *Breton Women by a Fence* are closely related. In each image, a figure with her arms akimbo is situated in a corner of the foreground surveying the unfolding scene. Strong diagonal lines divide each composition in half; in Gauguin's print the fence acts as the divider, while in Bernard's composition the trunk of a tree grows on an angle. Even the details of ducks are included in each composition, located in the center of Bernard's composition, almost concealed among the rungs of the fence in Gauguin's; in both instances they mockingly echo the activities of the women. Additional details suggest that either the artists influenced each other while working on

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[30] I thank Daniel Morane for pointing this out in conversation on 15 March 2005.

[31] It is possible too that they were not all colored by Bernard himself.

the two suites, or perhaps that they had worked so closely together in Pont-Aven in the autumn of 1888, sharing motifs and hashing out the ideals of Synthetism together, that there was significant cross-over in their work during the winter of 1889, whether or not they witnessed one another's progress in making the print series. Whichever the case, the cow in the lower left corner of Gauguin's *Washerwomen* is exceedingly similar to the cow on the cover of Bernard's frontispiece.[32] Both animals are located in lower corners of the compositions; their forms mirror each others.

Boyle-Turner cites the massive scale of the figures with their full rounded forms, and the attitude of one figure posed with her back to the viewer facing into the scene as characteristic of Bernard's contemporary work, and evidence of the mutual influence exercised by the two artists.[33] Indeed, Gauguin's bending laundress is related to Bernard's bending figure in *Women Hanging the Laundry* and to the kneeling figures in *Women Making Haystacks*.

The figure seen from behind with her arms akimbo is repeated two more times in the compositions Bernard included among *Les Bretonneries*. She appears on the title page and also in *The Harvest* (figure 4.11). On the title page, standing behind a slender tree, the figure has a monumental, columnar presence, evocative of the megaliths of Brittany. The face is turned in profile, but the contour of the nose and chin are suggested only by a soft, abbreviated curve, like the form of an ancient rock worn away by sea and sand. There is an organic quality to Bernard's figures; the bodies of the two kneeling women in

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[32] Caroline Boyle-Turner, *Gauguin and the School of Pont-Aven: Prints and Paintings* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1986), 52.

[33] Ibid., 52.

*Women Making Haystacks* echo the mounds of hay they are bundling just as they echo one another. Their forms are hardly differentiated from one another or from the landscape. In the way that their heads turn simultaneously at similar angles they could be two waves or two birds utterly lacking human individuality. Similarly, the forms of the two seated women at the top of the title page also replicate one another and are differentiated only by the hand-coloring of their blouses and skirts. They too are part of a decorative scheme, passages of flat color comprising organic forms evoking a timeless landscape.

Although the figures' costumes preclude it from inclusion among *Les Bretonneries*, another hand-colored zincograph executed during the same period, *The Walk* (*La Promenade)*, c. 1888 (figure 4.12), is strikingly similar to Gauguin's *Old Women of Arles* from the *Volpini Suite*. In Bernard's composition, several stylishly outfitted women stroll along a path in a park that is suggested by the outlines of four tree trunks. The foreground figures' coats and muffs reveal the season as winter; each of their faces is veiled. Bernard's *Walk* could have been inspired by Gauguin's painting *Les Arlesiennes*, which in turn was motivated by Vincent's canvas *A Memory of the Garden (Etten and Nuenen)*, 1888, a composition inspired by recollections of his mother and sister. The parallels among these works and the closeness of the artists' friendships at the time make the likelihood of mutual influence among Bernard, Gauguin and Vincent highly probable. Overall, I would argue that whereas the *Volpini Suite* is a highly developed, at times opaque, artistic statement concerned with myth-making and the creation of Gauguin's public persona, *Les Bretonneries* primarily addresses local color, costume, and anecdote.

**Images d'Epinal**

Among the sources that influenced both Bernard and Gauguin in 1888 and 1889 were French popular prints, hand-colored woodcuts or wood engravings, often religious in theme or derived from folklore and intended for the adornment or protection of homes or the decoration of taverns.[34] Such prints are most commonly known as *images d'Epinal,* named after the firm at Epinal in the Vosges which began in the sixteenth century. The sheets were either transported from Epinal and distributed by traveling salesmen (*colporteurs*) for small sums, or were produced in one of the regional Pellerin workshops, such as the one in Rennes. The crudely produced, colorful prints were found in rural households all over France, but those with religious imagery were most common in Brittany, the country's most devout region in the late nineteenth century. Scenes depicting the life of Christ or the Virgin were mounted directly to the walls of many Breton peasant homes.

Emile Bernard was enthusiastic about such popular imagery.[35] On numerous occasions in the late 1880s and 1890s, the angular, somewhat clumsy forms of the *images d'Epinal* were echoed in his paintings and prints.[36] Suggestions of such forms may be

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[34] Susan Lambert et. al., *French Popular Imagery: Five Centuries of Prints* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974), 13. Also see Denis Martin, *Images d'Epinal* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 1995); Nicole Garnier, *L'imagerie français,* 2 vols. (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990); Leonard S. Marcus, *An Epinal Album,* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1984).

[35] Thomson discusses the influence on popular imagery on Emile Bernard's oeuvre and his interest in woodcuts. See Thomson, *Gauguin's Vision*, 45.

[36] *Images d'Epinal* also influenced Gauguin, but I would suggest that he used them less literally than did Bernard.

detected in *Les Bretonneries*. Bernard's most serious immersion in medieval art—and his resulting dedication to the woodcut—seems to have begun around 1889. His absorption with the medium was to continue, and in 1892 he contributed woodcuts to *Le Bois,* a short-lived journal that attempted to revive the medium.

### *Les Bretonneries* and Color

It is interesting to note the dominant role that the color yellow played in hand-colored impressions of *Les Bretonneries*. Although he rendered each impression unique with variations in hand-coloring, Bernard used yellow repeatedly in the background of numerous impressions; for example, impressions of *Women Hanging Laundry* and *Women Making Haystacks* (figure 4.13) in the collection of the Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie Jacques Doucet have entirely yellow backgrounds. The field of grass occupying the entire background of *Women Making Hay* is a brilliant yellow. Using a mixture of ink and water Bernard created a mottled effect in the sky and tree in *Woman Hanging Laundry*, suggestive of a recession of space. While the sheets hanging on the line were uncolored and thus retain the white of the paper, Bernard used the same shade of yellow for the grass, sky, tree and even the apples hanging on the tree, creating an effect not dissimilar to the vibrating canary yellow of Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*. *The Harvesters* (figure 4.14) in the Indianapolis Museum of Art has minimal hand-coloring, all of which is a pale yellow, used throughout the field and the sky. Bernard also used yellow throughout an impression of *Return from the Pardon* (figure 4.15) at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. In this version, the yellow of the background fields is reflected upon the water and the collars of the Breton women in the ferry.

Among Bernard's early experimentations with printmaking is a woodcut, *Children's Game* (*Jeux d'enfants)* (figure 4.16) which depicts five figures playing jump-rope. In the Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, Jacques Doucet, Paris, there is an impression of this woodcut printed on canary yellow paper. The impression is only partially printed, and it is inscribed "fragment d'un de mes premiers bois 1888." As has been acknowledged, at times Bernard back-dated his prints inaccurately. If the inscription is accurate, it may have influenced Gauguin's choice of yellow paper; however, it is also possible that the date is incorrect and that Bernard printed this impression after having seen Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*.

In 1888-89 Bernard was interested in using brightly colored, unmodeled backgrounds in his paintings, and he experimented with a variety of hues as backdrops. In *Self Portrait*, 1888 (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam) (figure 4.17), a picture that Bernard sent to Vincent, he used a uniform soft blue as a background. In *The Buckwheat Harvest* (*Le blé noir*) (figure 4.18), he utilized a red-orange background. Together with *Breton Women in a Meadow*, this painting launched Bernard's Synthetist style. The two canvases are the same size and may be seen as pendants; Bernard exhibited them together at the Salon des Indépendents in 1892. The paintings complement one another in color (yellow-green versus vermillion), subject (leisure versus work) and season (spring versus autumn). Bernard's chromatic scheme is based on fact. Buckwheat was so abundant in Brittany that the area was known as the country of buckwheat: the ripening kernels turned a startling blood-red that stained the autumnal fields before maturing into the black that inspired their French name, *le sarrasin*. Bernard reprised both paintings in *Les Bretonneries*. The bending figures in the prints *Women Hanging Laundry* and in *Women*

*Making Haystacks* resemble the toiling figures in the background of *The Buckwheat Harvest*.

Gauguin's *Human Misery* executed in Arles is related in composition and palette to Bernard's *Buckwheat Harvest*, as is the red background of *Vision of the Sermon*. What is significant here is not who employed the unmodulated background of brilliant color first, but that both artists were doing so in 1888, each in his own way. The *Volpini Suite*, printed on yellow sheets, surely references this practice in both artists' paintings. In his memoirs, Jan Verkade, a Dutch artist who painted with Sérusier and the Nabis, referred to Gauguin and Bernard as equal initiators of the School of Pont-Aven, or Synthetism.[37] Perhaps Verkade's analysis of the exchange of ideas between Gauguin and Bernard is most apt: in different ways they were each pupil and master to the other.

[37] Dom Willibrord Verkade, *Le Tourment de Dieu*, trans. Marguerite Faure (Paris: Louis Rouart et Jacques Watelin Editeurs, 1923), 95.

**Chapter Five: The Legacy of the *Volpini Suite***

While a few collectors in France owned paintings by Gauguin, most of his followers could not afford his works in oil, although they certainly saw them. A number of artists owned impressions of the suite of prints, however, and after Gauguin's death, his prints became the lasting tangible evidence of his influence among his followers. In the final chapter of this dissertation I will explore the legacy of the *Volpini Suite.* I will first examine the influence of the *Suite* on Gauguin's subsequent prints, particularly *Noa Noa,* the set of ten woodcuts made in Paris in 1894 summarizing his first Tahitian sojourn. I will go on to discuss Gauguin's reputation in France immediately following his death in the Marquesas in 1903 and the influence of the *Volpini Suite* on subsequent generations of artists. Numerous artists who worked with Gauguin in Pont-Aven made prints during the early 1890s that reveal knowledge of the *Volpini Suite*. I will discuss several of these lithographs and etchings as evidence of Gauguin's immediate impact upon his contemporaries. The influence of the *Volpini Suite* is also keenly felt in the prints of the Nabis. I will examine the *Suite's* direct influence on prints by the Nabis. I will conclude the chapter by arguing that the *Suite* was important to Kirchner's lithographs and even his paintings. The Suite's influence on this German expressionist is a phenomenon that has never been discussed in the scholarly literature.

**Influence of the *Volpini Suite* on *Noa Noa***

Before departing for Tahiti in 1891 Gauguin made only one other print aside from the *Volpini Suite*: an etched portrait of his friend the Symbolist poet, Stéphane Mallarmé.[1] He held onto the idea of printmaking as vehicle for self-promotion, however. Upon his return to Paris in 1893, Gauguin conceived of a book that would combine text and images to describe his life among the natives and place his South Seas paintings within a context. *Noa Noa* was never published as Gauguin envisioned, but there are numerous parallels between the series of ten woodcuts that he designed for the project and the *Volpini Suite*. Charles Morice, a poet, critic and friend of Gauguin, compiled the text of *Noa Noa,* drawn from Gauguin's manuscript notes; in florid prose Morice described a sequence of loosely connected events that bore only a tangential relationship to Gauguin's ten prints. In the vast body of literature on the artist, considerably more attention has been paid to *Noa Noa* than to Gauguin's set of zincographs, but no one has studied the similarities between the two groups of prints.[2] Probably because these prints employed a different technique, the *Volpini Suite* has always been discussed as a preamble to the artist's "more

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[1] For a discussion of this portrait see Jessica Keuskamp, "Gauguin and Mallarmé," *A Painter's Poet: Stéphane Mallarmé* (New York: Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1998), 89-92.

[2] For discussions of the woodcuts, see Richard Field, "Gauguin's Noa Noa Suite," *Burlington Magazine,* vol. 110, no. 786 (September 1968): 500-511; Elizabeth Mongan et al., *Paul Gauguin: Catalogue Raisonné of His Prints* (Bern, Galerie Kornfeld, 1988), 48-115; Richard Brettell et al., *The Art of Paul Gauguin* (Washington, D. C.: Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, 1988), 317-329; Christopher Conrad, "Technique as Stimulus for the Artist's Imagination—Gauguin's Print Oeuvre," *Paul Gauguin: Tahiti* (Stuttgart: Verlag, 1998), 107-146; Barbara Stern Shapiro, "Shapes and Harmonies of Another World," in George Shackelford, *Gauguin: Tahiti* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2004), 116-222. Shapiro limits her comparison of the two portfolios to drawing a parallel between the two Martinique subjects in the *Volpini Suite* to the exotic setting evoked in *Noa Noa*, stating simply that the suite of zincographs served as an introduction to Gauguin's later woodcuts and foretold the artist's enduring affection for exotic subjects and brilliant color. See Shapiro, "Shapes and Harmonies of Another World," 117.

significant" woodcuts. I will not attempt here to address *Noa Noa* in its entirety, but rather, I will delve into the correspondences between the two groups of prints, looking closely at the woodcuts as they relate to the earlier zincographs.

Just as the *Volpini Suite* was made to visually summarize the first decade of Gauguin's career, subject matter, and exotic travels, *Noa Noa* was initially conceived in order to convey his profound interest in the exoticism and symbolism that he found in the art of "primitive" cultures and that he translated into his own paintings and sculpture. Above all, the book was made to explain—albeit in a highly personal and oblique manner typical of the artist—the Polynesian works of art that he had brought back to Paris. Just as the *Volpini Suite* was shown at an exhibition in which Gauguin symbolically proclaimed himself the leader of the new school of Synthetism, the *Noa Noa* woodcuts were initially intended for the November 1893 exhibition at the Durand-Ruel Gallery. Gauguin apparently wanted to herald his artistic developments in a medium that could reach a wider audience of collectors. He began working on the woodcuts in September 1893, soon after the dealer had agreed to rent the artist his gallery. Gauguin wrote to Mette, "I am preparing a book on Tahiti, which will facilitate the understanding of my painting. What work! I shall soon know whether it was an act of lunacy to go to Tahiti."[3]

To Gauguin's profound frustration, the collaboration with Morice was not completed in time for the exhibition, nor was it finished by the time of the artist's return to Tahiti in July 1895. In fact, many years passed before an edition of *Noa Noa* was published with anything resembling the text that Gauguin had written. Following legal disputes with Mette Gauguin, her sons, and Charles Morice, Georges-Daniel de Monfried

[3] Gauguin to Mette Gauguin, undated, October 1893, Paul Gauguin, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to his Wife and Friends* ed. Maurice Malingue (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), 187.

finally succeeded in publishing the book with Editions Crès in 1924, but it was illustrated—ironically—not with Gauguin's ten woodcuts but with twenty-four woodcuts created by Monfried .[4] An edition illustrated by the artist's own ten woodcuts was never realized.

In spite of the fact that his collaboration with Morice had reached an impasse, Gauguin exhibited the completed ten woodcuts in December 1894 in his Paris studio at 6, rue Vercingétorix. Of the ten woodcuts, three vertical and seven horizontal in format, Gauguin printed most of the prints in a single color or in black, sometimes on colored papers, or on sheets that were lightly washed with color. Occasionally he added touches of color by hand, sometimes combining printed and hand-applied coloring. According to eye-witnesses, he did his own printing, rubbing the blocks by hand, or by applying his entire body weight against the block. In doing his own printing, he diverged from what he was able to achieve in the *Volpini Suite* zincographs which were produced by a professional printer, but Gauguin's impressions of the woodcuts in *Noa Noa* are similar in numerous ways to the final effect achieved in the suite of zincographs. His amateurish printing technique—the application of inconsistent pressure across the blocks and slightly off-register printing of multiple blocks—resulted in images that vibrated just as the black ink in the *Volpini Suite* prints pulsated on the yellow sheets. Despite the fact that Gauguin began the woodcuts intending to explicate his Tahitian artistic production, the series of ten prints became a work of art unto itself, and as a final product was more esoteric and

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[4] To Monfried's credit, he gave Gauguin's manuscript of *Noa Noa* illustrated in Tahiti with watercolors and collages to the Louvre in 1927, a few months before Monfried's own death in November of that year. Isabelle Chan describes the frustrated collaboration between Gauguin and Morice and the tortured history of Gauguin's manuscript in "*Noa Noa*: The Voyage to Tahiti," *Gauguin: Tahiti* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2004), 92-113.

ultimately more mythic than the paintings and sculpture he brought back to Paris. The *Volpini Suite* was begun with a similar intention to describe the range of Gauguin's subject matter and advertise his paintings, and in this earlier series he achieved a greater simplification of style and a new level of artistic expression.

As in the *Volpini Suite,* Gauguin allowed technique to dictate the effect that he achieved in *Noa Noa*. He used a carpenter's chisel to scoop out relatively large and simple white areas, taking care to carve very shallowly in order to preserve the wavy textures created by the carved chisel. He tried to ink these lower surfaces—not usually attempted in woodcuts—in order to add texture to the image, sometimes creating the effect of dappled light. For instance, in an impression of the title page now in a private collection in Bern (figure 5.1), the sky is shallowly carved with the chisel; traces of brown ink give the effect of dappled light through clouds. He achieved related textured effects with tusche in the zincographs, creating sunlit sand in *Grasshoppers and Ants* and churning black waves in *The Drama of the Sea*.

Significant, almost amorphous, black shapes can also be found throughout both print series. In some images in *Noa Noa* such forms are easily decipherable, in other instances—sometimes because of the image, or the impression—the shapes are difficult to identify. Gauguin created such black forms by outlining contours with the thinnest possible white line. To create such a fine line, he used a knife or sometimes a needle, an unorthodox technique in making woodcuts. Using this practice he was able to create forms that were ideally Symbolist, experienced as either tangible forms with weight and solidity, or as non-crystallized shapes that seemed to be in the process of evolving.[5] A

[5] Richard S. Field, "Gauguin's Noa Noa Suite," *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 110, no. 286 (September 1968): 504.

clear example of such a form is the flying creature that approaches the standing female nude in *Nave Nave Fenua (Fragrant Isle)*. In an impression printed by the artist's son, Pola in 1921, the creature is clearly delineated. However, in a second state that Gauguin printed himself, now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (figure 5.2), the creature and the female nude are vastly more ambiguous, and the viewer must grapple to ascertain the subject matter. The nude seems more an apparition than a solid form. I would argue that this was precisely Gauguin's intention. A similar effect is achieved in *Hamna No Varua Ino (The Devil Speaks)* (figure 5.3) in which a group of figures encircles a campfire. In the impressions that Gauguin printed, the figures almost disappear in the shadows. A pair of dancers near the flames is almost imperceptible. Gauguin worked hard to preserve the subtle, suggestive aspect of his woodcuts even after progressive cuttings. Such deliberate ambiguity has numerous parallels in the *Volpini Suite*. For example, in deciphering such images as *Dramas of the Sea: Brittany*, it is very difficult to grasp the space in the composition. What is cliff, water, rock, distant land? Uncertainty heightens the tension that the viewer experiences in perceiving the figures at the edge of a precipice. It is not clear what lies beyond the cliff's edge. I find the effect that he achieved in the woodcuts, with their colored papers, varied surface textures, wide range of grey tones and his use of bold, often ambiguous black forms to be similar to effects he achieved in the *Volpini Suite*. I would suggest that Gauguin's experience in making the zincographs had enabled him to be more experimental in his woodcut technique and that he found innovative ways to utilize planographic skills while working in relief. It is likely that the wide range of effects that lithography offered raised his expectations of the variety of effects possible to achieve in working in wood.

Richard Field describes Gauguin's attempt to create luminous forms within a context of dark tones as highly original in the woodcut process.[6] Field cites the lithographs of the Symbolist Eugène Carrière as a direct source of inspiration for Gauguin. I would suggest that Gauguin's pursuit of luminosity in a printed media was already evident in the *Volpini Suite*, although the lithographs of Carrière and of Odilon Redon may have been influential to his graphic work after 1889. I have discussed the influence of Redon's lithographs upon Gauguin's decision to make prints in Chapter One, but I raise the issue again here in order to stress that some of the elements that make *Noa Noa* such an extraordinary set of woodcuts were already evident in Gauguin's graphic work of 1889. The contrast of passages of pure black ink with the brilliance of the canary yellow paper created a striking optical effect in the *Volpini Suite* that, to my mind, vibrated with simultaneous boldness and mystery similar to the woodcuts that Gauguin intentionally printed with a blurred effect. Among the *Noa Noa* prints, in *The Creation of the Universe (L'Univers est créé)* (figure 5.4) Gauguin appears to conjure the rebirth of the human race after the flood. In three impressions of the first state that he pulled himself, and particularly one printed in black on pink paper now in the collection of the Art Gallery of Princeton University, many figures and symbols are deliberately left undefined (figure 5.5). The image seems to tremble with uncertainty, the image hovering at edge of phantasmagoria. In the second state Gauguin reworked the block with an engraver's gouge, and an array of faces and bodies emerged from the sea. The sea in *The Laundresses* and *Dramas of the Sea*, flat patterns of decorative swirls, remained as uncertain and suggestive as the water in the first state of *The Creation of the Universe*.

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[6] Ibid., 504.

As in the suite of zincographs, in the woodcuts Gauguin reformulated ideas he had explored in paintings and sculpture of the previous years. Once again, he was working in a graphic format that forced him to simplify his ideas, and he distilled compositions and motifs down to their essentials. Not only did the landscapes, foliage, figures, and decorative elements in the prints stem from previous imagery in paintings, the *Noa Noa* woodcuts summarized his personal Tahitian mythology. *Auti Te Pape (Women at the River)* (figure 5.6) reprised the oil painting *By the Sea*, reinventing the theme of two bathers originally addressed in *Breton Bathers* of the *Volpini Suite*.[7] One figure sits on a riverbank while another throws herself into the sea, arms upraised, the face turned in profile. The composition combines fragments of other compositions; the seated figure is a mirror image of the foreground figure in the painting *Aha oe feii? (What! Are you Jealous?)*, 1892 (W. 461) (figure 5.7). Similar figures seated on a warm stretch of sand appear in the *Volpini Suite*: two such figures are poised in the foreground of *Cicadas and Ants*. The arching form of a tree is just visible at the top margin of *Auti Te Pape*. Gauguin utilized similar, curving trees, so Japanese in their stylization, in the two paintings mentioned above as well as in the zincograph *Human Misery*. In dissecting *Noa Noa* and the *Volpini Suite*, one finds extraordinary parallels in style, subject matter, and motif. It is only by comparing his work in various media that his working method becomes clear. The beginnings of his mature style—the themes, myths, symbols and abstract patterning—were all evident in the *Volpini Suite*.

[7] In a unique first state impression in the Art Institute of Chicago, printed by the artist twice, in black and reddish brown ink from the same block, Gauguin created a vibrating effect that mimics the shimmering effect of sun and water.

Throughout his career, Gauguin continued to revisit themes in prints that he had first executed in paintings. In 1893 he made the lithograph *Watched by the Spirits of the Dead (Manao Tupapau)* (figure 5.8) based on a canvas by the same title painted on the first Tahitian journey. Printed in black on white paper, the lithograph describes a young woman lying across a white bed who is observed by a specter. The print was published in *L'Estampe originale*, a quarterly journal of original prints published from 1893-95 by André Marty. The journal was comprised of avant-garde, Symbolist prints in all media by a wide range of primarily French and a few British artists. Printed in an edition of one-hundred, *l'Estampe originale* had a wide audience and even in 1893 established a milestone in the importance of the original print in the Parisian art world. Its publication—and I would argue that even its precursors such as the *Volpini Suite* and Manet's *The Raven*—led to the production of numerous other print journals produced in Paris throughout the 1890s such as *Les Peintres-lithographes* (1892-97), *L'Estampe* (1893-95), *L'Epreuve* (1894-95), *Etudes de femmes* (1896), *Album des peintres-graveurs* (1896), *Album d'estampes originales de la Galerie Vollard* (1897), *L'Estampe moderne* (1897-99), and *Germinal* (1899).[8] Today *L'Estampe originale* is considered a veritable breakthrough in the commercial distribution of artist's prints.[9]

Just as he had altered and simplified the composition of *Human Misery* when transforming the composition into graphic format in the *Volpini Suite*, the lithograph

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[8] For literature on the print portfolios of Paris in the 1890s, see Phillip Dennis Cate et al., *Prints Abound: Paris in the 1890s* (Washington: Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, 2000).

[9] For literature on *l'Estampe originale*, see Donna M. Stein and Donald H. Karshan, *l'Estampe originale: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York, The Museum of Graphic Art, 1970), and Patricia Eckert Boyer and Phillip Dennis Cate, *l'Estampe originale: Artistic printmaking in France 1893-1895* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: Van Gogh Museum and Waanders Publishers, 1991).

*Watched by the Spirits of the Dead* does not merely reproduce the painting of the same title. The space in the print is flatter, the composition more decorative, the symbolism more complex. For example, in the painting, brilliant yellow forms on the batik textile on the bed are clearly delineated against a blue ground. In the black and white print, however, these organic forms are more stylized and less easily interpreted. Gauguin made numerous additions to the printed composition including a totemic design inscribed below the artist's monogram, the nude female form of an idol, and what appears to be the stylized head and hand of a female figure. Such additions seem to me akin to the addition of the mysterious figure behind the fence in the zincograph *Human Misery*. Who is the figure and what does its presence signify? He rendered the space in these prints—as well as numerous others in the *Volpini Suite*, particularly the pair *Dramas of the Sea* and *The Laundresses*—intentionally ambiguous. Although reproductive in some respects, *Watched by the Sprits of the Dead* and *Human Misery* are simultaneously simplified but highly complex graphic renderings of themes previous addressed in his paintings. Gauguin went on to repeat the process begun in the *Volpini Suite* of revising in prints compositions of earlier paintings. He did so in numerous prints from both the first and second Tahitian sojourns including *I Salute You Maria (Ia Orana Maria)*, 1894-5; *The Day of God (Mahana Atua)*, 1894-5; *Memory of Meyer de Haan*, 1896-7; *Eve*, 1898-99; *Woman with Mangos (Te Arii Vahine—Opoi)*, 1898; and *Human Misery*, 1898-99 (figure 5.9).

**Posthumous Recognition of Gauguin in France and the Effect of the *Volpini Suite***

At times it is difficult to differentiate between the influence of Gauguin's prints and that of his paintings upon his followers. In this section I will focus on the effect that the *Volpini Suite* had upon the artists of the subsequent generation; however, in the discussion I will also address his posthumous reputation more broadly in order to explain his reception in France and Germany.

It took three months for the news of Gauguin's death on May 8, 1903 in Hiva Oa in the Marquesas Islands to reach France. Georges-Daniel de Monfried was notified of the artist's death and he shared the information with Gauguin's close associates, particularly Charles Morice and Ambroise Vollard, along with former disciples from Pont-Aven such as Armand Seguin. A death announcement circulated in Paris, but memorials in the French press were minimal. About ten newspapers nationwide limited their comments to three or four lines each, and the first substantial article by François Thiébault-Sisson, a personal nemesis of Gauguin's, was published in *Les Temps* in September. Sisson's article was scathing and denounced Gauguin as a *demi-sauvage* whose artistic vision was clouded by alcoholism and insanity. Although Sisson's character assessment would have affirmed Gauguin's portrayal of himself as a Peruvian savage and martyr to modern art, the article was damaging to Gauguin's posthumous reputation.

Gauguin's friends and disciples rose to his defense. Within a month, Charles Morice, Maurice Denis, and Monfried all wrote articles defending Gauguin's work and his memory. Attempting to seek further support of Gauguin and his art, Morice conducted a survey that asked artists and intellectuals associated with Symbolism to

summarize their opinions of Gauguin—particularly his talent, doctrine, work, influence and attitude. The responses revealed that Gauguin was not only remembered, he was revered by the creative minds of his generation. Among those whose opinions were published were Eugène Carrière, Charles Guérin, Camille Lemonnier, Roger Marx, and Odilon Redon, Louis Roy, Armand Séguin, and Paul Signac.[10]

Gauguin's dealer, Ambroise Vollard organized the first large posthumous exhibitions of his work in Paris. In the first show, which opened at his gallery in November 1903, Vollard put on view his entire collection of Gauguin's works, including fifty paintings and twenty-seven drawings and monotypes from both Tahitian voyages. In 1905 Vollard organized another, even larger exhibition of Gauguin's work, this time of about sixty works, including paintings, watercolors, ceramics and sculptures. Vollard hoped that, following the exhibition, the French state would acquire one of Gauguin's major paintings for the Musée de Luxembourg, but he was disappointed. Following a failed attempt to mount an exhibition at the Ecole des beaux-arts, Morice argued for a state sponsored retrospective of Gauguin's oeuvre. Concurrently, Denis proclaimed in an article:

> It is high time that they [the French officials] recognized the value of his [Gauguin's] work and the important position he occupies in the history of modern art. No French painter has had a greater influence since Manet. What Manet was for the generation of 1870, Gauguin was for the generation of 1890.[11]

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[10] Charles Morice, "Quelques opinions sur Paul Gauguin," *Mercure de France*, vol. 48 (October-December 1903): 413-433.

[11] Maurice Denis, "La Peinture," *L'Ermitage* No. 11, November 15, 1905, pp. 309-319. Reprinted in Maurice Denis, *Le Ciel et l'arcadie* (Paris: Hermann, 1993), 85. "Il est temps qu'on reconnaisse, et la valeur de son œuvre, et la place importante qu'il tient dans l'histoire de l'art moderne. Depuis Manet, il est le peintre français qui eut la plus grande influence. Ce que fut Manet, pour la génération de 1870, Gauguin le fut pour celle de 1890. "

The first large-scale retrospective of the artist's work was finally held in 1906 at the Salon d'automne. The exhibition featured 227 works from every period in Gauguin's career. Gustave Fayet loaned twenty-five paintings, twenty-six works on paper, two sculptures in wood, seven ceramics and most significantly for this discussion, a complete set of the *Volpini Suite* on yellow paper listed as "Dix lithographies sur papier jaune."[12] In total 128 paintings, 88 drawings, 12 wood sculptures, 14 ceramics, 11 woodcuts, and three albums of drawings were loaned by Ambroise Vollard, Francisco Durio, Fabre, Schuffenecker, Monfried, Olivier Sainsère, and Gigot.

Vollard continued to play an important role in establishing the artist's posthumous reputation as Gauguin's most active dealer. He organized another exhibition of Gauguin's works for the spring of 1910 which gathered together works representative of every period of his career. It was also in 1910 that Gauguin entered the French national collections with a painting at the Musée de Luxembourg, a small painting, *Still Life with Oranges*, 1880, which was a bequest from the ceramicist Ernest Chaplet who had died the previous year.[13]

While French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist canvases hung on the walls of numerous venerable European collections, France was most reluctant to sanction modern painting by purchasing canvases that were perceived as avant-garde. It was not until the 1920s that French museums began to add works by Gauguin to their collections in a

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[12] Société du salon d'automne, *Catalogue des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, dessin, gravure, architecture et art décoratif exposés au grand palais des champs-élysées du 6 octobre au 15 november 1906* (Paris : Compagnie française des papiers-monnaie, 1906).

[13] The fact that a more significant picture by Gauguin had not been purchased was in keeping with the Luxembourg's attitude toward modernist artists. At that time, the museum owned no works by Manet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, only one by Renoir, and a study by Toulouse-Lautrec.

significant way through gifts and bequests as well as purchases. Gauguin finally entered the Musée du Louvre in 1927 thanks to Monfried, who sold *The White Horse* to the museum at a greatly reduced price. In the same year Monfried gave the manuscript copy of *Noa Noa* to the Louvre. Although a number of Gauguin's manuscripts belong to the Louvre's collection, according to the Inventaire du department des arts graphiques, the *Volpini Suite* is not included in the Museum's collection. The Bibliothèque Nationale owns a set of impressions from the Vollard Edition of the *Volpini Suite* printed on off-white paper around 1899, but there are no impressions from the original 1889 edition printed on yellow paper in the collection.

**Prints of the Pont-Aven School**

The final Impressionist exhibition of 1886, in which Seurat's success with *La Grande Jatte* and the solid establishment of a group of Neo-Impressionists surrounding him, had inspired intense jealousy in Gauguin. Since that time, the establishment of a group of followers marked a significant psychological aspiration for the artist. Throughout the 1880s, Gauguin gravitated toward younger artists susceptible to his powerful personality and artistic influence. Emile Bernard, Paul Sérusier, Armand Seguin, and Maxime Maufra were among the artists who met Gauguin in Pont-Aven and who subsequently made prints that suggest the direct influence of the *Volpini Suite*. Because of Bernard's claim to have inspired the *Volpini Suite*, I have discussed Bernard's zincographs *Les Bretonneries* at length in Chapter Four, but here I will address prints by

other artists of the Pont-Aven School that reveal Gauguin's influence either in technique, style, or subject matter.[14]

Paul Sérusier's (1864-1927) lithograph on zinc, *The End of the Day (Le Fin du jour)*, 1893 (figure 5.10) was printed on canary yellow paper extremely close in color although lighter in weight and smoother in texture than the paper Gauguin selected in 1889. Among all the prints made by artists of the Pont-Aven School, Sérusier's print displays the most direct influence of the *Volpini Suite.* Sérusier was more a painter than a printmaker; during the course of his career he made only a few prints. The fact that color played such an important role in his oeuvre probably indicates his penchant for oils over printmaking. Although the majority of his drawings were highlighted in color, in only a few of his prints did he attempt color. This can probably be explained by the fact that the medium of color lithography was technically complex and would have required multiple zinc plates or stones as well as the challenging task of meticulous registration. In color lithography each color required its own stone or plate printed on the same sheet, one after another. Few artists of the period attempted such works without the supervision of a professional printer. *The End of the Day* was one of the few occasions on which Sérusier attempted color lithography. Annotations in the margins of a trial proof now in the collection of the Indianapolis Museum of Art indicate that the zincograph was printed by a professional printer. Sérusier's handwritten notes instruct the printer Edouard Ancourt—the same printer responsible for the *Volpini Suite*—to use a paler shade of

[14] Caroline Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his Circle in Brittany* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986) and Marianne Grivel, *Gauguin & l'Ecole de Pont-Aven* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989) both address the subject of the prints of the Pont-Aven School, neither author has concentrated particularly on the influence of the *Volpini Suite.*

green. The artist apparently found that the initial shade of green contrasted too much with the yellow paper and the brown ink.[15]

In *The End of the Day*, Sérusier quoted from the *Volpini Suite* not only in his choice of paper, but also in subject and style. The Breton man pausing in a tilled field is parallel to the subject matter of Gauguin's prints which describe Breton figures—albeit usually women—at work. The grove of trees ascending into the distance is Japanese in its stylized, angular simplicity, similar to the tree in *Human Misery.* The rickety fence that winds over the hills was typical of Pont-Aven and is similar to those found in Gauguin's *Breton Women by a Fence* and *Human Misery.* Even the anonymous worker with his back to the viewer is similar to Gauguin's depiction of women at work in *The Laundresses*. They, like Sérusier's figure, are faceless, almost absorbed into the landscape from which they inseparable.

The print was made for the second installment of *l'Estampe originale*. I interpret Sérusier's choice to emulate Gauguin, who also contributed a lithograph to the journal, as a significant sign of Gauguin's and the *Volpini Suite's* status in 1893. By making such a direct reference to Gauguin, Sérusier identified himself as a follower of Gauguin, and by printing on paper of the same remarkable color as the *Volpini Suite*, he took for granted that his audience of print connoisseurs would recognize his reference to Gauguin's *Suite*.

Although Armand Séguin (1869-1903) used etching rather then lithography on zinc, his prints also reveal an awareness and influence of the *Volpini Suite.* The majority of Séguin's artistic output was in prints; during his short career—he died at the age of

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[15] Sérusier's annotations: "vermillion, garance, bleu d'or, noir, blanc, vert jaune. Bon à tirer vert plus léger." Translated as "vermillion, madder, blue-gold, black, which green-yellow. Okay to print, lighter green."

thirty-four—he produced more than ninety original prints while fewer than twelve paintings by the artist are known. He was first exposed to Gauguin's work at the Volpini Exhibition, and seeing the *Volpini Suite* and *Les Bretonneries* may have inspired him to take up printmaking with great enthusiasm in 1891. Although Boyle-Turner argues that Sérusier had a greater influence than Gauguin on Séguin's printmaking, I see Gauguin as a significant force in Séguin's choice of media, subject matter, simplification of forms, and the appropriation of Japonisme in his work.[16] The two artists worked together frequently during the early 1890s in France, and Gauguin apparently even hoped that Séguin would join him upon his second sojourn to the South Seas.

Uneven inking and a lack of pristine finish in his prints suggest that Seguin did much of his own printing, and may explain his initial preference for etching over lithography. An unpublished letter from Séguin to Delâtre in the private collection of Samuel Josefowitz suggests that Séguin utilized a small proofing press in Pont-Aven; his familiarity with the technical process is evident in the instructions for printing that he sent to Delâtre in Paris along with some of his plates in 1893.[17]

*The Dance of Pont-Aven (La Ronde de Pont-Aven),* 1891 (figure 5.11) was among Séguin's first etchings, and reveals obvious familiarity with Gauguin's painting *The Circle Dance of the Breton Girls* and the zincograph *Joys of Brittany.* The formation of the circle of figures, their intentional clumsiness, and the rhythm created by their bodies and swaying headdresses are reminiscent of Gauguin, as is the large scale of the figures compared to the surrounding buildings and landscape. Séguin took liberties with the

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[16] See Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his Circle in Brittany*, 81.

[17] Armand Séguin to Auguste Delâtre, c. 1893, private collection of Samuel Josefowitz, Lausanne, Switzerland.

geography of Pont-Aven by including a view of the sea beyond the church steeple; the sea is actually not visible from Pont-Aven. His inclusion of the steeple, however, parallels Gauguin's painting and print of the subject, as do the glimpses of houses and trees.

In *The Dance* Séguin provided much more detail in the costumes of the figures than did Gauguin, even in his painting of the subject. Séguin's later etchings would become much more schematic. *Nude with Chignon (Nue avec chignon),* c. 1893 (figure 5.12) is one of three Synthetist nudes by the artist. Séguin worked with Bernard during the winter of 1892-93, and the Cloisonnist outline that defines the contour of the figure's form confirms Bernard's influence. What I perceive as the obvious parallels with Gauguin's zincograph *Breton Bathers* and the painting *In the Waves*, which Seguin would have seen in the Volpini exhibition, has not been addressed, however. In the etching, Séguin described the nude back of a female figure, preferring a lyrical, decorative form over anatomical accuracy; the figure's shoulder melts into her back with distortion typical of Gauguin. There is scarcely any modeling of the figure, once again similar to Gauguin's treatment of the foreground nude in *Breton Bathers.* Even the figure's dark hair swept up into a chignon is reminiscent of the closely cropped dark hair of Gauguin's bather in the lithograph.

A series of twenty-three etchings made by Séguin in 1893-4 (figure 5.13), sketchy Breton figure studies, implies a familiarity with Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* while even more directly referring to Bernard's *Les Bretonneries*. Séguin's etchings may be regarded as preparatory for some larger project that never came to fruition, perhaps a painting or a larger, more complex etching. The drawing style that Séguin utilized in his figures

attempts, albeit rather unsuccessfully, to imply volume. Overall, however, they remain emphatically static and two-dimensional, similar to the figures in Bernard's *Les Bretonneries*. Although in these etchings Séguin does not approach the success or subtlety that Gauguin achieved in the *Volpini Suite*, I would argue that Séguin was nevertheless inspired by Gauguin, and that his mentor's prints had an effect on his choice of subject matter and media.[18]

Another member of their circle, Maxime Maufra (1861-1918), produced landscape prints with flat, decorative shapes, frequent lack of perspective, and linear rhythms, which echo Gauguin's stylized treatment of the Breton countryside in the *Volpini Suite*. Maufra's Symbolist landscapes, almost always lacking figures, are characterized by a pervasive atmosphere of quiet melancholy. They adhere to the advice that Gauguin so often tried to give Vincent van Gogh, to work as much from memory as from the motif. Maufra's attempt to evoke emotions in the viewer would have resonated with Gauguin, whose *Volpini Suite* was as much about his personal experiences in exotic locales as about specific, identifiable sites. In his etchings of Breton subjects from 1893-94, I detect a simplification of forms similar to Gauguin's treatment of the landscape. For example, in *The Wave (La Vague)*, 1894 (figure 5.14) Maufra described waves beating against the black rocks of Le Pouldu. Although the monumental form of rocks at the right is not nearly as ambiguous as Gauguin's treatment of the rocks in *Breton Bathers*, they occupy a similar dominant presence in Maufra's composition. Likewise, Maufra was meticulous in his treatment of water in the print; in six states he refined a fine network of lines to describe the waves, only adding aquatint in the final sixth state to create a variety

[18] For an excellent analysis of Séguin's graphic oeuvre, see Richard Field and Cynthia L. Strauss, *The Prints of Armand Séguin 1869-1903* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 1980).

of textures differentiating the rocks and water. I see Maufra's Breton prints as harking back to Gauguin's earlier treatment of the landscape of the region in the *Volpini Suite*.

**The Nabis and Printmaking**

Gauguin's influence on subsequent generations of artists began well before his death in 1903. His most direct influence, after those artists who worked with him in Pont-Aven, was on a group of young artists working in Paris during the 1890s who called themselves the Nabis, a circle of painters and printmakers whose philosophy could scarcely have existed without the example of Gauguin. I will discuss the influence that Gauguin and particularly the *Volpini Suite* had upon Nabis philosophy, painting and printmaking.

Sérusier acted as the conduit between Gauguin and the Nabis, and his zincograph *The End of the Day*, 1893, made in emulation of the *Volpini Suite* and published in *l'Estampe originale*, helped disseminate Gauguin's style among Nabis printmakers of the 1890s. Sérusier has been credited with founding the group that came to be known as the Nabis and is most famous for his painting known as *The Talisman*, painted under the direct tutelage of Gauguin in Pont-Aven in the autumn of 1888. The experience of painting with Gauguin was transformative and led Sérusier to emulate Gauguin's style in subsequent paintings and prints, and to spread his influence among his contemporaries in France and in Germany.

The group of artists who eventually called themselves the Nabis joined together in early 1889 with the aim of pursuing the intellectual ideas that lay behind Gauguin's Synthetism. The young men were all in their twenties when they met, studying either at

the Lycée Condorçet, the Ecole des beaux-arts, or the Académie Julian. The primary members of the group were Paul Sérusier, Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard, Maurice Denis, Pierre Ranson, and Ker-Xavier Roussel.[19] The Nabis experimented in a diverse range of techniques. Unburdened by the traditional idea of hierarchies among media, they embraced printmaking as enthusiastically as painting. In fact, the Nabis' most original artistic contribution is considered by many to be their innovations in color prints.[20] They are unique among artistic movements of the nineteenth century in their achievement in color lithography. Although at first glance the Nabis and their art may appear naïve and unsophisticated, their work marked a significant step in the progression of art at the end of the century. The group did not really form a school as such, nor were they held together by a common style or subject matter. In fact, the artists worked together despite numerous apparent contradictions; some were conservative, even reactionary in their religious and mystical involvements. What held them together was their modernist belief in the power of independent line and color to communicate meaning. This doctrine placed them among a theoretical avant-garde that prefigured the development of abstract art.

The Nabis' color lithographs were among their most successful works of art. Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*, which many of the artists among the Nabis saw either at the Volpini exhibition, or subsequently at Boussod et Valadon, or in collections of Theo van Gogh, Charles Filiger, Emile Schuffenecker, and Charles Laval, influenced their choice

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[19] Vuillard and Roussel met in 1878 at the Lycée Condorcet, and they in turn met Bonnard at the Académie Julian. Others joined the group in the 1890s; in early 1891, Jan Verkade arrived from Holland, where Gauguin's Dutch friend, Meyer de Haan had introduced him to Sérusier. Felix Vallotton, Georges Lacombe, Józef Rippl-Rónai from Hungary, James Pitcairn-Knowles from Scotland, and Aristide Maillol also became associated with the Nabis.

[20] Patricia Eckert Boyer, ed., *The Nabis and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press and the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1988), 119.

of format and medium. The three principal Nabis artists—Denis, Bonnard and Vuillard—were among the most creative printmakers of the last decade of the nineteenth century in France, and they played an important role in the evolution of lithography. Even their simple act of using the color lithograph for artistic expression was remarkable. Color lithography, even in 1890, was best known in the form of the commercial poster, thanks to the extraordinary achievements of Jules Chéret. The connection of lithography to commerce and industry had relegated the medium to the status of commercial rather than fine art, and it was scorned accordingly. Nonetheless, tremendously innovative color lithographic posters by Chéret and later Toulouse-Lautrec had blurred the lines between high and low art and between art and advertising.

In 1898, the Symbolist critic and art historian, André Mellerio, wrote an important document in support of the color print, *The Original Color Lithograph* (*La Lithographie originale en couleurs*), published by the journal *L'Estampe et l'affiche*. Mellerio began with a short history of lithography, and he defended lithography, arguing that it was the medium appropriate for the artists' inspiration. "That is, an artistic inspiration was first brought into accord with a technique, and was expressed directly in the chosen method of execution."[21] For Mellerio, the artist's conception and technique, as well as the overall meaning of the work of art were all inextricably linked. His support for the medium had favorable results; in 1899 the lithographic color print was finally admitted into the Salon. The medium shifted from being regarded as one used strictly for commercial purposes, to one of the most typically modernist modes of expression. It is not surprising that in the

[21] André Mellerio, *La Lithographie originale en couleurs* (Paris: L'Estampe et l'Affiche, 1898), "c'est-à-dire qu'un inspiration d'artiste se mariait d'avance à une technique et s'exprimait directement dans le procédé choisi d'exécution."

*Volpini Suite* Gauguin prophetically chose this medium to create a visual resumé of his work up to 1889, and that the Nabis adopted color lithography to make some of their most important artistic statements.[22]

By the end of the 1890s, lithography had come into its own as an independent art form. In fact, most of the prints made by artists during this decade were color lithographs made in limited editions of about a hundred, intended for print connoisseurs. The Nabis played a significant role in the evolution of the medium, but I would suggest that Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* inspired the Nabis and his example was in large part responsible for the ascension of the medium. Decorative surface pattern, bright colors and overall flatness were among the most characteristic aspects of Nabis prints. Their lithographs were often built from unmodulated planes of color, each printed from individual stones. The Nabis shared Gauguin's enthusiasm for ukiyo-e. Bonnard and Vuillard in particular absorbed the Japanese use of simple, strong contours—extremely similar to those Gauguin used to enclose his figures in prints such as *Breton Bathers* and *The Old Women of Arles*—decorative use of black and white or bold, brilliant colors, the tendency to reduce three-dimensional forms to surface pattern, and the use of diagonal bird's eye perspective.[23] The Nabis absorbed these Japanese principles into their color lithographs

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[22] Interestingly, Mellerio credited Odilon Redon with resuscitating lithography during a precarious moment in its history. He wrote, "Finally we remember Odilon Redon, who had great foresight as regards this Idealist movement, and his novel vision, individuality of method, knowledge, and hallmark of technical execution, kept lithography alive during an almost fatal period of discredit and profound indifference!" André Mellerio, "La Rénovation de l'estampe," *L'Estampe et l'affiche* 1 (March 15, 1897): 5. "Enfin nous rappellerons Odilon Redon, si prescient de ce mouvement Idéaliste, et dont la conception originale, la personnalité des procédés, la science et le soin d'exécution technique, maintinrent la lithographie pendant une période presque mortelle de discrédit et de profonde indifférence!"

[23] Boyer, ed., *The Nabis and the Parisian Avant Garde*, 24.

so completely and yet so personally that their art can scarcely be conceived of without the influence of ukiyo-e. Like Gauguin, Bonnard owned prints by Yoshimura, Kunisada and Hiroshige, and Vuillard collected drawings and woodcuts by Hiroshige, Harunobu, Masayoshi, and Hokusai. Some of the contortions of Vuillard's figures may have been borrowed from prints reproduced in *Le Japon artistique*. Despite these borrowings, however, Bonnard and Vuillard always maintained a profoundly personal element in their work. They mingled wit and naiveté with solemnity in compositions that at first glance may appear simple, clumsy or awkward, but were, in fact, conceived with great care, and stand today as masterpieces of simplicity and perception.

The Nabis produced some of the most important portfolios of lithographs in the history of printmaking. Like the *Volpini Suite*, Nabis portfolios were not based on narrative, but were comprised of a series of images based on a general theme, epitomizing the notion of visual text without the accompaniment of a literary text. The entire concept of their portfolios is strikingly similar to the *Volpini Suite*. Among the most significant Nabis lithographic portfolios were three suites made in 1899 published by Amboise Vollard: Bonnard's *Aspects of Parisian Life (Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris)*, Denis' *Love* (*Amour)*, 1899, and Vuillard's *Landscapes and Interiors* (*Paysages et intérieurs).* Vollard championed the Nabis' graphic work, and by publishing portfolios of their prints he was partly responsible for the explosion of color lithography at the close of the nineteenth century in Paris. After Gauguin's departure for Tahiti—likely around the time that he published the Nabis suites—Vollard obtained the zinc plates used for the *Volpini Suite* from Schuffenecker and reprinted them on off-white simili Japan paper. The effect was nothing like the original edition, but his interest in reissuing the *Suite*

demonstrates his level of interest in the medium and his belief in its marketability and may have provided an example followed by Bonnard, Vuillard and Denis.

**Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard**

Of all the Nabis, Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) and Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940) were the most innovative in their use of color lithography. They used the medium as Mellerio suggested, creating lithographs in which the subject, medium, and meaning were intrinsically linked. Their seemingly simple compositions in color utilized the white of the paper in a surprisingly sophisticated way; their prints were never merely colored drawings. Although after the turn of the century, Bonnard and Vuillard abandoned the Nabis aesthetic, their early prints were characterized by lively distortions in scale and perspective, asymmetry, and bright colors, and were much affected by Gauguin.

Bonnard's first lithograph borrowed directly from Gauguin. The poster, *France-Champagne*, (figure 5.15) appeared in Paris in March 1891, and it took viewers, who were used to posters by Jules Chéret, by surprise. The composition was strange, the drawing exaggerated. The round, hand-painted letters of the title contrasted with the printed text in a way that was perplexing. The color scheme was limited but extremely bold: the artist made use of a clever play of dark black lines against a brilliantly colored yellow background. Bonnard employed a similar crenellated line to delineate the figure's coiffure and the edges of her dress. The same decorative line weaves its way throughout the composition, also evoking the effervescence of the champagne, and thus likening the fleeting, ephemeral pleasures of the champagne and the woman's delight in drinking it.[24]

[24] Boyer suggests too that the ephemeral pleasure of the champagne is likened to subtle signs of the figure's illness. Berthe Schaedlin was the young model who posed for *France-Champagne.* Boyer argues that Schaedlin's beguiling presence encompasses a disturbing mixture of the

The month after it was published, Félix Fénéon praised the poster in *Le Chat Noir*, declaring it better than those of Appel and Lévy. Bonnard's poster so inspired Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec that he decided that he too would try his hand at posters. Bonnard then introduced Toulouse-Lautrec to his printer, Edouard Ancourt, who had previously printed Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*.

Bonnard made only nine other posters after *France-Champagne*. *La Revue Blanche*, 1894 (figure 5.16), an advertisement for Thadée Natanson's Symbolist periodical, was also extremely successful. Bonnard had high regard for these two lithographs; he included them in his first one-man show at Durand-Ruel's gallery in January 1896. Neither poster design is Symbolist, but both were completely modern in their use of flat, simplified forms and repetitive, decorative pattern and line. In *La Revue Blanche*, Bonnard playfully emphasized the two-dimensionality of the figure, wrapping the letter "a" around the form of the woman's umbrella.

A comparison between the final editioned state of Bonnard's *Family Scene*, 1892 (figure 5.17), with an early proof demonstrates the level of simplification and flatness that he was striving toward. In an early proof, he added touches of blue watercolor throughout the composition, inserting a leaf pattern in the upper left and bringing another dimension to the woman's plaid dress. In the final state, the palette is limited to black, brilliant green, and a dark orange-brown. The omission of the soft blue tone flattened out the composition and made the curious contours of the adults' faces as they lean toward

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conventions of feminine beauty and the signs of illness. The figure's cheeks are flushed and her mouth is full—overt signs of contemporary beauty; however, those same signs were also suggestive of consumption. This flush, her soulful gaze, and the artful pose of the figure's hand would have served as shorthand for the tremulous signs of consumption. See Boyer ed., *The Nabis and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, 20.

the infant more caricatural and wittier. In his clever manipulation of flat shapes of color across the surface of the page, Bonnard juxtaposed areas of figure and void in a manner highly influenced by Japanese prints. Bonnard was nicknamed "le nabi très japonard" (the Japonizing Nabi), and in his color lithographs of the 1890s the reasons for this are apparent.

Bonnard's drawing *Woman with a Dog*, c. 1892 (figure 5.18) and the compositions of many of his lithographs from the early 1890s are structured around interlocking areas of pattern and void. In the drawing, the woman's plaid-patterned dress fits around the white dog who stands in front of her. The image lacks any volume and is dependent on the viewer's understanding of the interaction of line and color, figure and void. Japanese prints and contemporary popular prints are an obvious source, but I would consider the *Volpini Suite* and *Les Bretonneries* as sources as well. Bonnard's simple drawing style is influenced by compositions such as Gauguin's *Human Misery* and *The Laundresses* in which the figures are reduced to flat outlines without modeling. Bernard's simple style, and the way he described figures in *The Harvesters* also may have been influential to Bonnard. Although they often express wit and humor, Bonnard's figures—as well as those of other Nabis—are almost always devoid of facial expression. This too is in keeping with Gauguin's and Bernard's treatment of figures in their lithographic portfolios of 1889, where almost no overt description of human emotion is evident.

In Bonnard's *Aspects of Parisian Life* (*Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris*), 1899 (figure 5.19), his use of lithography became increasingly sophisticated. By printing one color on top of another, instead of printing each color next to the other in a jig-saw puzzle manner, he achieved the effect of densely interwoven layers of color, making the

composition appear even more complex than it was. Throughout the portfolio, he captured fleeting, poignant moments of Parisian life with extraordinary vividness and immediacy. Through his color lithographs, Bonnard raised the level of the medium to a new height.

Vuillard's portfolio of twelve color lithographs, *Landscapes and Interiors* (*Paysages et Intérieurs*), 1899 was also a breakthrough in color lithography. Here, the artist used color more to convey mood than for accurate description. Vuillard's "intimisme" is highly ambiguous. By building up images with dense layers of color, one printed on top of another with as many as six stones, he created an atmosphere thick with claustrophobic overtones. The landscapes in the portfolio are perhaps even more innovative than the interiors. In images like *The Avenue* (figure 5.20) he created a deep and unusual perspective that contrasts with the flatness of the patterned colors. The use of the white paper as light source is an essential part of the composition and lighting. Vuillard and Bonnard's portfolios are the best-known examples of Nabis art because they so comprehensively sum up the ideals of the group's artistic philosophy, but, without the examples of Gauguin and Bernard's lithograph series, they might never have existed.

**Maurice Denis**

The subject matter, technique, and style of early prints by Maurice Denis (1870-1943) such as the zincograph *Breton Washerwomen (Les Lavandières bretonnes),* 1890 (figure 5.21), reveals the influence of Gauguin and Bernard. In Chapter Four I discussed the close relationship between the *Volpini Suite* and *Les Bretonneries*; thus it is fitting that artists among the Nabis would have known and been influenced by both portfolios. Although more delicately rendered with a network of finely drawn lines, the stooped

washerwoman in Denis' zincograph is reminiscent of the bending figure in Gauguin's *Washerwomen* from the *Volpini Suite*. The flat, decorative floral motif that is repeated throughout the composition, as well as the pattern of vertical lines, is similar to Bernard's use of lavis to provide texture throughout *Women Hanging Laundry* from *Les Bretonneries*. Also similar to Bernard's composition, Denis places a female onlooker—who is also cropped at the waist—in the lower left hand corner of his print. A serpentine path winds its way throughout the background of Denis' composition in a way that is related to the diagonal line of the tree that cuts through Bernard's *Women Hanging Laundry*, or even Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon*.

At the end of the decade, Denis' *Amour*, a series of twelve color lithographs plus a cover, was commissioned and published by Vollard. Each of Denis' compositions was accompanied by a short original text printed in the lower margin, such as "Our souls in slow movements" (Nos Ames en des gestes lents) (figure 5.22) below an image of a woman with a rose listening to a man playing the piano. Soft, round figures in tranquil spaces were printed in muted colors, but the links to the texts were tenuous and, at times, the portfolio descended into sentimentality. The idea, however, sprung from Gauguin's and Bernard's portfolios of prints, and despite its flaws, *Amour* exemplified Denis' belief that Symbolist art was capable of communicating states of mind through relationships of color and form.

**Ker-Xavier Roussel**

Ker-Xavier Roussel's (1867-1944) early lithograph, *In the Snow/Training the Dog (Dans la neige/L'Education du chien),* 1893 (figure 5.23), leans heavily on the influence of Bernard's *Les Bretonneries* and on Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*. Two female figures, rendered as dark silhouettes against a light background, are located at the edge of a wood. The placement of the figures is the only suggestion of recession of space within the composition which otherwise lacks perspective. The foreground figure is cropped by the lower margin, and the second, smaller figure is located on a path that leads back to a cluster of trees. Roussel's stylized, sinuous line, the detail of the little dog, the flat areas of local color, and strong contours, all demonstrate the Nabis' distillation of Synthetist ideas. Like Serusier's color lithograph *The End of the Day*, Roussel's *In the Snow* was published in *l'Estampe originale.*

At the end of the 1890s, Vollard commissioned Roussel to make a series of landscapes (*Paysages*) with the idea of publishing them as an album similar to series he had published by Denis, Bonnard and Vuillard. Although a complete album was never published, in 1898-99, Auguste Clot did print several color lithographs by Roussel depicting landscapes. His use of soft colors and impalpable line was probably influenced by his use of pastel at the time, a medium in which he later excelled.

**Paul Ranson**

In terms of palette, Ranson's *Tiger in the Jungle* (*Tigre das la jungle*) (figure 5.24), also published in *l'Estampe originale*, is evocative of the *Volpini Suite*. A color lithograph, the composition frames a leaping tiger against a canary yellow background. Ranson must have appreciated the bold possibilities of black ink on a yellow ground in

the *Volpini Suite*. Although he chose to print the color yellow on a white sheet instead of using yellow paper, the effect of Ranson's lithograph is similar to Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*. The effect of the twisting form of the tiger, surrounded by organic arabesques of flowers and trees is accentuated by the use of a single, brilliant color. Both his composition and his use of color reveal Ranson's longstanding interest in Japanese art, mediated by the work of Gauguin.

**Aristide Maillol**

Aristide Maillol (1861-1944) first encountered Gauguin's art at the Volpini exhibition. The exhibition was transformative for the young artist who had been studying with Gérôme and Cabanel at the Ecole des beaux-arts, but was discouraged by their academic styles. Maillol later recalled that Gauguin's art provided the guidance he needed as a young artist.

> Gauguin's painting was a revelation to me. The Ecole des beaux-arts, instead of enlightening me, blindfolded me. When I looked at [Gauguin's] pictures of Brittany, I felt that I could work in that spirit. I immediately said to myself that what I did would be good if it met with Gauguin's approval. Indeed, twice he seemed pleased with my tapestries; once at the Salon des XX in Brussels [1894], the second time, I believe, at the Nationale [April 1895]. My work was well placed, because I had chosen the position myself. As I was leaving, I met him in the street and he told me he had been looking for me everywhere and that I had produced the most beautiful work of art in the Salon, and he invited me to go for a drink with him.[25]

[25] John Rewald, "Les Ateliers de Maillol," *Le Point: revue artistique et littéraire* 17 (November 1938): 206-207. "Pour moi cet art fut une révélation. L'Ecole des beaux-arts, au lieu de m'éclairer, m'avait voilé les yeux. Devant ses tableaux de Bretagne je sentais que je pourrais travailler dans cet esprit. Vous comprenez, je me suis dit aussitôt, que ce que je faisais serait bon lorsque Gauguin l'aurait approuvé. Et en effet, par deux fois il a approuvé mes tapisseries; un fois à l'exposition des "Vingt" à Bruxelles, et l'autre, je crois, à la Nationale. J'étais magnifiquement placé, car j'avais choisi moi-même la place. Lorsque, en sortant, je le recontrai dans la rue, il me dit qu'il m'avait cherché partout, que j'avais fait le plus bel objet d'art du Salon, et il m'invita à prendre un verre avec lui."

Although now known primarily as a sculptor, Maillol revealed the profound influence Gauguin had upon his early development in his paintings and prints from the 1890s. No one has drawn the connection between Maillol's early paintings and prints and the *Volpini Suite*, but I would suggest that Maillol's familiarity with Gauguin's prints is obvious in the palette of Maillol's paintings, as well as in his choice of subject matter, the simplification of forms and use of decorative patterning in his prints.

Maillol met Gauguin through Monfried, probably during the winter of 1889 when Gauguin had recently returned to Paris from Arles. Although he was never a member of the Nabis, Bonnard and Denis were Maillol's closest friends. The Volpini exhibition provided the first opportunity for a concentrated study of Gauguin's works. In addition to the works that he saw in the exhibition, Maillol would have had access to additional Breton landscapes by Gauguin that belonged to Monfried. Thus, in his own refined way, Maillol developed a kind of kinship with Gauguin, although the two artists never became close. Gauguin's work, however, had an obvious impact on Maillol's paintings of the early 1890s. Despite the fact that Maillol had studied sculpture at the Ecole des arts décoratifs, and that he is best known for his sculpture made after 1900, from 1890-93 he concentrated exclusively on painting, struggling to achieve a personal style. Gauguin's most explicit effect on Maillol was during these formative years in the young artist's career.

Although many of Maillol's early paintings have been lost, in those that remain, the influence of the *Volpini Suite* is, in my opinion, explicit.[26] *Girl Tending Cows,* c. 1889

[26] Maillol often appeared indifferent to the fate of his artwork after it had passed out of his possession. Late in life, when asked about the fate of an important painting executed thirty years

(figure 5.25), relied on Gauguin's Breton landscape style and subject matter. The palette of the canvas is almost entirely a brilliant yellow. Ochre cows graze in an expansive field of golden wheat that recedes into the distance. An introspective, stylized figure in the foreground appears lost in daydreams. She is a more benign version of the protagonist in Gauguin's *Human Misery*. The flat planes of space, suggestive of spatial recession, borrow from Gauguin's Breton paintings, as did Maillol's use of a very high horizon line and parallel bands of color executed with short, feathery brushstrokes.

Maillol later acknowledged the impression that Gauguin's art had made on him as a painter. "It has been said that, at the beginning of my career, I was influenced by Gauguin's sculpture in wood; that is a legend. He was useful to me, but only in painting."[27] Whether or not Gauguin's wood reliefs and sculpture played a role in Maillol's development as a sculptor is immaterial to this argument. What is significant is that Maillol himself recognized the debt that he owed Gauguin in his paintings of the 1890s, and that his knowledge of the *Volpini Suite* is evident in his early paintings and prints.

The female figure in a landscape—the frequent subject of prints in the *Volpini Suite*—was the predominant theme in Maillol's paintings of the early 1890s. From 1891-94, Maillol made a series of bust-length portraits of a solitary woman positioned in profile against a simple chrome yellow background such as *Profile of a Woman (Profil de femme),* c. 1890 (figure 5.26), and *Crowned Child (L'Enfant couronné),* c. 1892 (figure 5.27). In both paintings, the sitter is adolescent or younger and her gaze is cast

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before, Maillol responded, "I know nothing about it. I gave it away." Judith Cladel, *Aristide Maillol; Sa vie, son oeuvre, ses idées* (Paris: Grasset, 1939), 39.

[27] Ibid., 130.

downward. Landscape details such as slender branches of a tree in *Profile of a Woman* and the crown of flowers in *Crowned Child* incorporate nature in a decorative guise into the spare composition.

In *Two Girls: Spring (Deux jeunes filles, printemps),* c. 1893 (figure 5.28), two girls of apparently the same age and size wear similar dresses. Their attitudes, however, are entirely different. The model from *Girl in Blue* stands in three-quarter profile and her open gaze is directed toward the viewer; she is nature personified, the crown adorning her hair unaffected. In contrast, much of the other figure's face is concealed by a broad-brimmed, fashionable hat, she holds a staff and looks away, apparently about to depart the space of the picture. It has been suggested that the two figures represent Maillol's attitude toward the women of his home town, Rossillon, whom he described as direct and sensual in contrast to the women of Paris whom he found inaccessible and unfriendly. It has also been suggested that the girl in pink represents spring, while the distant figure with the blue hat is winter, retreating off-stage.[28]

The contrast of two female figures symbolizing either sexual availability or unavailability or spring or winter was, of course, not unique to Maillol. The juxtaposition of two physically similar figures who differed in emotional qualities was utilized by Gauguin in numerous works including the zincograph *Breton Bathers*, the painting *Life and Death,* and the drawing *At the Black Rocks,* reproduced on the cover of the catalogue of the Volpini exhibition. Christopher Gray first argued that the contrast of the two figures lay in their sexual implications. He interpreted the crouched figure as a "symbol of fear and reluctance" and the figure who throws herself into the sea as personifying

[28] Wendy Slatkin, *Aristide Maillol in the 1890s* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1976), 30.

sexual liberation as she "abandons [herself] to the caresses of the mysterious sea."[29] I have offered a somewhat similar interpretation of *Breton Bathers* in Chapter Two. It is possible that Maillol was influenced by the contrast of female sexual presences in *At the Black Rocks*, and that *Spring* is his own, albeit quieter, interpretation of the theme.

The resemblance between the figures in *Spring* with *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* that Gauguin painted in Arles is striking. Not only are their open faces, three-quarter poses, shoulder-length dark hair revealing one ear, and curved red lips strikingly similar, the brilliant yellow backgrounds further serve to link these pictures. Around the same time as his profile paintings of girls set against yellow backgrounds, Maillol experimented with zincography with *Profile of a Girl (Profil de jeune fille),* c. 1893 (figure 5.29). In a delicate outline, Maillol described the head and shoulders of a young woman in profile whose hair is pulled back into a chignon. The image is unremarkable except for the fact that it is printed on canary yellow paper, unmistakably influenced by the *Volpini Suite*. Another zincograph, *The Laundress (La Lavandière),* 1895 (figure 5.30), suggests Maillol's familiarity with Gauguin's zincographs. Maillol's treatment of the subject is gentler, more decorative than Gauguin's, his models prettified. Maillol's revision of Gauguin's theme of the laundress foreshadowed his reinterpretation of one of the motifs most central to Gauguin's oeuvre: the woman in the waves.

Maillol borrowed the motif of a female nude in the waves for two oil paintings, a woodcut, a ceramic bas-relief, and a tapestry. In Gauguin's treatment of the subject, discussed at length in Chapter One, the mood is intense and enigmatic, whereas the figure in Maillol's *The Wave (La vague),* c. 1891 (figure 5.31), lacks mystery and tension. Like

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[29] Christopher Gray, *Sculpture and Ceramics of Paul Gauguin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), 43-44.

the surrounding swirling waves, all of the lines of her body are curving and decorative. Her brown hair lies in curls like little waves lapping against the pale sand of her back. The painting derives from Gauguin's *In the Waves,* but with the intention of being voluptuous and harmonious. In place of Gauguin's awkward and disturbingly posed figure with head thrown back, arm raised, and body stretched diagonally from left to right, Maillol arranged his figure decoratively with her limbs echoing one another, and the curves of her spine and buttocks repeated in the forms of the waves. His other treatment of the theme in oil, *Woman in the Wave (La Femme à la vague)*, c. 1898 (figure 5.32), is more frankly sensual, and likely also influenced by Courbet's *Woman in the Waves,* 1868. Whereas the body of the figure in *The Wave* was an unmodulated pale beige, Maillol emphasized the sensuality of the skin with warm, variegated tones. Monfried owned the canvas by Maillol and hung it among the Gauguins in his collection, implicitly acknowledging their relationship.

Maillol's way of indicating waves is adapted from Gauguin's own decorative, linear treatment of water, both in his paintings and zincographs. Maillol owned a seascape by Gauguin, *The Beach at Pouldu (La Plage du Pouldu),* 1889 (W. 1964, 362) (figure 5.33), in which the foam of the waves is painted in bright white strokes that stand out against the dark shades of the sea and the black rocks.

The theme of the woman in the waves was repeated in two wood engravings modeled after the paintings, *Bather in the Sea (Baigneuse en mer),* 1895 (figure 5.34) and *Wave (La Vague)* (figure 5.35), as well in as a glazed ceramic relief, *Wave (La Vague),* c. 1898 (figure 5.36). In the following decade Maillol frequently reincarnated a theme initially used in one medium, utilizing it in a second and sometimes a third medium. In

this way, he continued to practice lessons learned from Gauguin even after the direct influence of the older artist had ceased to be a dominant theme in his work.

**Gauguin in Germany and his Influence on Ernst Ludwig Kirchner**

To conclude this chapter, I will argue that the *Volpini Suite* played an important role in influencing Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's (1880-1938) graphic works from 1910-20, just as Gauguin's woodcuts influenced the German Expressionist. Kirchner was an erudite, highly intellectual artist who worked from a number of influences. Although the artist himself denied the significance of outside influences on his work, no artist works in a vacuum. The subject has been addressed by numerous scholars, and various authors have argued for aspects of Edvard Munch, Félix Vallotton, Henri Matisse and the Fauves' art in Kirchner's paintings.[30] Gauguin has been considered influential to Kirchner's sculpture, and the brilliant, even lurid palette in Kirchner's paintings has led scholars to make connections with Matisse and Derain. However, I perceive Kirchner's use of color as completely different from the way these French artists were utilizing color.

While no one has discussed the influence of the *Volpini Suite* on Kirchner's work, I propose to do just that in this section, demonstrating parallels between the two artists'

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[30] Several authors have addressed the influence of Gauguin on Edvard Munch's work. Although Munch is known to have seen some of Gauguin's paintings at Boussod et Valadon in the autumn of 1889 (after the Volpini exhibition had closed) and during the autumn of 1891 at the home of Mette Gauguin in Copenhagen, I have found it impossible to confirm whether Munch knew the *Volpini Suite*. Therefore, I have chosen not to include an examination of Munch's work in this study. For literature on the influence of Gauguin's paintings on Munch's style, see Henri Dorra, "Munch, Gauguin and Norwegian Painters in Paris," *Gazette des beaux-arts,* November 1976, pp. 175-180; and Musée d'Orsay, *Munch et la France* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1991).

graphic works. I will suggest that Kirchner's interest in non-western art was spurred by Gauguin's subject matter. I will extend this argument to encompass the idea that Kirchner saw Gauguin not so much as a French artist but as an outsider who linked himself to the "primitive" cultures that he emulated. Further, I will argue that Kirchner's use of the color yellow in his lithographs as well as some of his Brücke and Berlin paintings was a symbolic nod to Gauguin.

Before examining the *Volpini Suite's* influence on specific works by Kirchner, I will set the stage by briefly examining Gauguin's reputation in Germany during the years immediately following the French artist's death. German artists were exposed to French avant-garde art in numerous exhibitions that were held in the first decade of the twentieth century in collaboration with Parisian dealers such as Vollard, Bernheim Jeune, and Drouet, as well as private collectors and at times they even knew the artists themselves. The earliest exhibitions of Gauguin's work in Germany were held in Hagen in 1903 and in Weimar in 1905, as well as in Munich and Dresden in 1910. Gauguin's works were included in group shows in Munich in 1904, in a traveling show in 1906-7 that went to Munich, Dresden, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, and Stuttgart, and in another exhibition in Mannheim in 1907.[31]

Gauguin himself had recognized a potential audience for his work in Germany. In 1894 he and August Strindberg attempted to organize a show of his work there, but the plan went unrealized. The premier issue of the German cultural journal *Pan*, published in April 1895, referred to an auction of Gauguin's work at the Hôtel Drouot that had been

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[31] See the discussion of these exhibitions in Peter Kropmanns, *Gauguin und die Schule von Pont-Aven im Deutschland nach der Jahrhundertwende* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke Verlag, 1997), 12-40.

held the previous February in order to fund the artist's final trip to the South Seas. The exhibition in Hagen was organized by Karl Ernst Osthaus, the founder of the Folkwang Museum, and included seven canvases depicting Tahitian subjects that Osthaus himself had purchased.

Along with Osthaus and Julius Meier-Graefe, publishers of *Pan*, Count Harry Kessler was the strongest early supporter of Gauguin's work in Germany. A connoisseur of French avant-garde art, Kessler was an admirer of Rodin and patron of Maillol. He purchased Gauguin's painting *Manaò tupapaú* from Vollard in 1903 from the exhibition that immediately followed the artist's death. Kessler served as honorary chairman of the board at the Grossherzogliches Museum in Weimar until 1906, and it was here that he was able to realize the first large-scale exhibition in Germany devoted to the work of Gauguin. The Weimar Museum was the site of numerous significant exhibitions of modern art that included works by Monet, Cézanne, Denis, Bonnard, Rodin, and the Neo-Impressionists. The exhibition in 1905 included thirty-three works by Gauguin. It was comprised of works borrowed from the private collections of Gustave Fayet (one of the most important collectors of Gauguin's work in Paris at the time), Maurice Fabre, and Gauguin's friend Monfreid. The un-illustrated checklist included only descriptive titles and no media descriptions; however, it is clear that most of the works were oil paintings, along with several works on paper and a wood relief. A few works were from Gauguin's Brittany period, but the majority were Tahitian.[32]

Although the critical reaction in Weimar to Gauguin's work was mixed and the grand duke apparently was angered by the exhibition, the fact that the artist's work was

[32] For a list of the works exhibited, see Peter Kropmanns, "The Gauguin Exhibition in Weimar in 1905," *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 141, no. 1150 (January 1999): 24-31.

being received in Germany and that it attracted the attention of several critics bolstered French confidence in Gauguin. In a letter from Monfried to Kessler, the French collector assigned the Germans a significant role in the genesis of the retrospective of Gauguin's work at the Salon d'automne of 1906. Monfried also referred to the imminent appearance of the first monograph on Gauguin—Jean de Rotonchamp's *Paul Gauguin. 1848-1903*—whose printing in Weimar in 1925 was promoted by Kessler. Monfried expressed the hope that the volume would be ready in time for the opening of the Salon d'automne. The sustained German interest in Gauguin was underscored by the publication of Gauguin's *Noa Noa* in 1908 by the Berlin publisher Bruno Cassirer.

**Paul Gauguin at the Galerie Arnold, Dresden, September 1910**

After Gauguin's retrospective at the Salon d'Automne in 1906, exhibitions of his work continued in Germany. In 1910 an exhibition of Gauguin's work held in Dresden proved important to artists of the Brücke, particularly Kirchner, the founder of the group, as well as Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rotluff and Max Pechstein. During the first years of the twentieth century, Dresden—just an hour's train ride from Berlin—was one of the art centers of Germany. The city's galleries hosted exhibitions of works by Seurat, Signac, Munch, Klimt, Van Gogh, and Gauguin, and the Galerie Arnold, in particular, showed some of the most avant-garde art in the city. More than twenty paintings by Gauguin were exhibited at the Galerie in September 1910, concurrent with an exhibition of Brücke paintings. An exhibition catalogue of the Gauguin exhibition does not survive, but contemporary reviews were specific enough to identify many of the works, by subject

and period, if not by title.[33] Although the *Volpini Suite* was not commented upon specifically in the reviews, it may have been included, and as I will discuss, an early lithograph by Kirchner strongly implies that the German artist was already an admirer of Gauguin's zincographs even before the 1910 exhibition.

To advertise the exhibition, Kirchner made *Poster for the Exhibition Paul Gauguin at the Galerie Arnold, Dresden*, (D. 713) (figure 5.37), reproducing a canvas in the show, *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, 1888. The woodcut was printed in dark blue ink on yellow paper, echoing the palette of Gauguin's painting and of the *Volpini Suite*. A remarkable reinvention of Gauguin's painting as well as an extraordinary work of art in its own right, the poster was the most artistically significant of the eleven Brücke posters produced before the dissolution of the group in 1914. Kirchner delicately shaved the woodblock around the figure's eyes and jaw to suggest the delicate shading of Aline Gauguin's face as was indicated in Gauguin's portrait. Kirchner took care to reproduce the sensual exoticism of the figure's mouth and eyes, emphasizing both in the print with dark ink. He accounted for the difference in media in much the same way that Gauguin did in translating his own oil paintings into zincographs in the *Volpini Suite*. The figure occupies a greater portion of the space in the woodcut and Kirchner framed her within an irregular, discontinuous frame edged in dark blue ink. The figure's hair has taken on an even more decorative form, the curls and ribbon are more exaggerated, more graphically described than in the painting.

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[33] In his study on the reception of Gauguin in Germany, Kropmanns lists the artist's paintings exhibited at the Galerie Arnold; Kropmans, *Gauguin und die Schule von Pont-Aven im Deutschland nach der Jahrhundertwende*, 46-47.

Echoes of Gauguin's portrait of his mother can be found in Kirchner's painting *Marzella*, 1910 (figure 5.38), which has been compared to Munch's canvas *Puberty*, 1892 and even Gauguin's *Young Girl with a Fan (Jeune fille a l'éventail)*, 1902 (W. 1964, 609), but curiously the connection to Gauguin's portrait of Aline Gauguin has not previously been made.[34] Kirchner's portrait of a nude girl utilizes a brilliant yellow background similar to the paper in the *Volpini Suite* and to the background in Gauguin's portrait of his mother. The figure's dark hair frames her face in a manner similar to Gauguin's painting. Her hair is adorned with an oversized white ribbon, an imitation of the blue ribbons that curl behind Aline Gauguin's coiffure. Marzella's dark eyes beneath straight dark brows stare out of the canvas in a manner similar to Aline Gauguin's gaze. Furthermore, Kirchner accentuates Marzella's sensuality by emphasizing her red curving mouth in way that, to me, reflects his familiarity with Gauguin's portrait.

I would suggest that Kirchner's first exposure to Gauguin may have occurred via Cuno Amiet, a Swiss painter. Amiet studied at the Académie Julien from 1888-1891 and became acquainted with Sérusier, Denis, as well as other Nabis artists. In 1892 he went to Pont-Aven where he became friends with Bernard and Séguin, and saw works of art by Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh first hand. Amiet began working with the Brücke artists in 1906, and in his own work he brought Gauguin's symbolism of rich, flat areas of color to the Dresden artists. Amiet could easily have brought Gauguin's prints with him to Germany and shared them with the Brücke artists. Kirchner's first direct exposure to Gauguin's art might well have occurred in Munich where he spent two semesters

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[34] For the comparison with Munch's painting, see Jill Lloyd and Magdelana M. Moeller, eds., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003), 18-19.

studying in 1903-4. During this time, Kirchner would have had numerous opportunities to see exhibitions that included works by Vincent van Gogh, Cézanne, Gauguin, and Matisse.

**Kirchner, Lithography, and Yellow Paper**

Kirchner is considered the greatest printmaker of the Brücke. He excelled in woodcut and etching, but it was in lithography that he achieved his greatest originality. Between 1907 and 1937, Kirchner produced over 450 lithographs. Among these, over seventy were printed on brilliant yellow paper.[35] Interestingly, Kirchner's father was a paper chemist, and he undoubtedly learned much about paper from him.

The earliest of Kirchner's lithographs printed on yellow paper was a poster publicizing a 1907 exhibition of Brücke paintings on display in Emile Richter's showroom (figure 5.39).[36] The fact that Kirchner printed an advertisement for a Brücke exhibition on yellow paper suggests to me that he had likely seen impressions from Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* before the 1910 exhibition at the Galerie Arnold, and even that he may have associated the color yellow with avant-garde art. The paper became an important component of Kirchner's printmaking. He often used yellow paper for lithographs printed in black ink; for lithographs printed in colors, he preferred white paper.

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[35] For the catalogue raisonné of Kirchner's graphic work, see Annemarie Dube and Wolf-Dieter Dube, *E. L. Kirchner: Das Graphische Werk,* vols. I-II (München: Prestel-Verlag, 1967).

[36] Richter was a German industrialist whose space was used to house some of the first Brücke exhibitions. I thank Kathrin Beer, Specialist, Impressionist and Modern Paintings, Christie's Zurich, for this information.

Kirchner published articles on his own drawings and graphic works under the pseudonym Louis de Marsalle. The articles originally appeared with numerous illustrations in 1921 in "Zeichnungen von E. L. Kirchner" in *Genius*.[37] Kirchner praised the medium of printmaking:

> There is no greater pleasure than that of seeing the roller pass of the cut wooden printing block for the first time; or applying nitric acid and gum arabic to the lithographic plate and observing whether the desired effect is obtained, or following the process by which a sheet matures, through its different states, to the final version…There is no better place to get to know an artist than in his graphic work.[38]

He felt that prints gave definitive, more lasting shape to a freer method of drawing. He also believed that the rigors of printmaking released creative power in the artist that went unutilized in the "more lightweight" processes of drawing or painting. Kirchner began making graphic works around 1900. He endorsed the laborious, but frequently underutilized process of lithography and felt that the technique was capable of brining out tonalities that had never before been achieved. He described his affinity for the medium:

> His [Kirchner's] lithographs are prints pulled by the artist himself. He works the stones until the first drawing has become altogether graphic: that is to say, the drawn lines disappear and are newly constituted by the etching. Deep blacks alternate with silken greys that result from the grain of the stone. The soft tonality of the grey zones defined by the grain makes an impression of color and lends warmth to the sheets. In this way, Kirchner as established a personal lithographic technique that has far greater means as its disposal than the woodcut…The editions of Kirchner's lithograph are extremely small: five, seven or ten prints, in addition to which the artist pulls a number of prints of interim states. He has never used transfer paper, which nowadays is unfortunately used in the creation of most lithographs, making them nothing but reproduced drawings. To date, Kirchner has produced some four hundred lithographs, in four different formats, the largest of

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[37] Originally published in Louis de Marsalle (E. L. Kirchner), "Zeichnngen von E. L. Kirchner," *Genius*, vol. 2, book 2 (Munich, 1921), 216-34. Two articles translated in their entirety in Lloyd and Moeller, 2003, 209-13.

[38] Ibid, 211.

> them 50 x 60 cm. All his lithographs show the rim of the stone. For prints in black, the artist prefers to use lemon-yellow paper.[39]

The above quotation indicates Kirchner's "purist" attitude toward printmaking. Similar to Gauguin's attitude toward the *Volpini Suite* and *Noa Noa*, the German artist considered the print a challenging art form in itself rather than a way to duplicate drawings. His dedication to the medium is indicated by the skill he achieved in printing his own lithographs—an aptitude few artists have mastered—and by his invention of a color process through his overprinted colors from a single stone.

The chemistry of lithography is complex but also extraordinarily flexible, and Kirchner set out to exploit all of the medium's possibilities. In order to avoid using lithography to merely replicate his drawings, Kirchner found ways of creatively manipulating the technique. He covered his drawings on stone with a film of turpentine and water which he allowed to set for several hours. This caused the crayon lines and tones to bleed slightly, creating fused lines and slightly mottled areas. Flecks of crayon migrated across the stone, which created pitted tonal effects. The image was then etched, rolled up with ink, and when finally printed, the result often bore only a vague resemblance to Kirchner's initial drawing.[40] Furthermore, Kirchner always printed his lithographs to show the uneven edges of the stone, a practice professional workshops strictly avoided. Kirchner's penchant for chance and creativity in his lithographs is parallel to Gauguin's attitude toward zincography. In Chapter One I argued that part of the medium's appeal to Gauguin and Bernard—aside from the fact that it was cheaper

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[39] Ibid, 212.

[40]For a discussion of Kirchner's creative use of printmaking, see Jacob Kainen, "The Monumental Achievement of Ernst Kirchner," *Art News*, vol. 72, no. 3 (March 1973): 37-40.

and more portable than traditional lithography on stone—was its propensity for unpredictable results. Zincography's seemingly crude, primitive results were sought by both artists; the medium's unpremeditated and under-civilized appearance what was valued.

Kirchner's lithographic oeuvre shows his experimentation in a variety of styles, and reveals his awareness of a wide range of influences including modernist artists such as his Brücke contemporaries, Matisse and the Fauves, and even Picasso and Cubism. Among the 458 lithographs made by the artist, over seventy were printed on brilliant yellow paper. I have listed the artist's lithographs printed on yellow paper in Appendix II.

Kirchner began making lithographs printed on yellow paper in earnest in 1909 and continued the practice throughout his years in Dresden and Berlin, until he voluntarily enlisted for military service in 1914. His lithographs of these years were typical of the Brücke style, defined by strong lines and intense burning colors. *Dancing Couple (Tanzpaar),* 1909 (D. 120) (figure 5.40), exemplifies Kirchner's love of experimentation. One can see in this print the intentional blurring of his lines, the varied textures created by the migrating particles of lithographic crayon, as well as his early use of strong, curved decorative line, to me closely related to the lyrical rhythms of Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* zincographs of Martinique. During his career, Kirchner addressed the theme of the dance in more than two-hundred images. This early work, although highly unrealistic in terms of the awkward position of the female dancer's legs,

nevertheless conveys a fluid sense of movement akin to the languid forms of Gauguin's figures in *Martinique Pastorale*, who seem locked in an exotic dance of their own.[41]

*Milliner in a Hat (Modistin mit Hut)*, 1910 (D. 138) (figure 5.41), also printed on yellow paper, is characteristic of Kirchner's early Brücke style and reveals the influences of the Jugendstil in the stark contrasts of light and dark and the juxtaposition of decorative line with solid black mass, not dissimilar to Gauguin's use of line and mass in zincographs such as *Breton Bathers* and *The Laundresses*.

In their curvilinear forms, Kirchner's Dresden prints suggest an optimistic affirmation of life's forces, but in his later prints from Berlin he became concerned with expressing the emotional life of the modern mechanized city and its social ills. His decorative arrangements gave way to more attenuated, angular, and tense compositions such as *Three Women in a Café-Garden (Drei Frauen im Cafegarten),* 1912 (Dube 243) (figure 5.42). In this lithograph printed on yellow paper, Kirchner described the figures with harsh, insistent, intersecting lines. Their forms reflect the tension of the German capital and modern society. Just as Gauguin sought to portray the character of the people and places he described in the *Volpini Suite* in zincographs such as *Human Misery* and *The Arlesiennes*, in the content of his prints Kirchner endeavored to reveal the ills and hypocrisies of his times.

Beginning in 1905, artists of the Brücke issued portfolios of prints intended for purchase by so-called "passive" members of the group, primarily art collectors and museum directors who would pay an annual fee to support the exhibitions and activities

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[41] For more on the theme of the dance in Kirchner's oeuvre see Shelley Cordulack, "Dancing to the Piper: A Study of Kirchner's Dance Images," *Bruckmanns Pantheon*, vol. 55 (1997): 162-171.

of the group's artists. The portfolios' purchase was two-fold: it was intended to raise a source of income critical to the poor, aspiring, young artists while simultaneously disseminating the Brücke's ideas and images to a cultivated audience in the form of inexpensive and easily reproduced art objects. The number of portfolios issued rose from only a handful in 1906 to sixty-eight in 1910, reflecting the growing interest of "passive" members of the group. The group began with the altruistic premise that artists would exhibit only collectively. The first portfolios contained prints by various members of the group, but by 1909 the policy had changed. Portfolios were devoted to a single artist-member of the group with a portfolio cover made by another artist-member. In 1910, Erich Heckel designed a woodcut cover for Kirchner's portfolio, *Cover for the Brücke Portfolio of 1910* (figure 5.53). Following Kirchner's specifications, the woodcut was printed in black ink on canary yellow paper. In Heckel's design, two nudes, a male and female, kneel to embrace one another. The woodcut was emblematic of the union of humankind with nature that the Brücke artists were seeking at the time, and the cover was an apt prelude to Kirchner's three prints contained within the portfolio.

**Kirchner and "Primitivism"**

While Gauguin was the obvious catalyst for Pechstein's trip to the Palau Islands in 1914 and Nolde's trip to New Guinea in 1913-15, Kirchner's reaction to Gauguin's art was in many ways more profound, creative, and ultimately more meaningful. The exhibition of Gauguin's paintings in 1910 seems to have focused Kirchner's attention on the stylistic possibilities of non-Western art and to have encouraged an exploration of man's proximity to nature in his art. Kirchner's fascination with the "primitive" was very

much parallel to Gauguin's enthusiasm for the ethnographic exhibitions at the Exposition Universelle of 1889. Kirchner's fascination with exotic cultures was reinforced by his observation of African dancers who performed at the zoological gardens in May 1910.[42] A thorough discussion of Kirchner's interest in "Primitivism" is beyond the scope of this dissertation; I raise the issue here only to make the point that Kirchner's and Gauguin's interests in the exotic found expression in the artists' printed oeuvres in curiously parallel ways.

Kirchner attempted to live out his fantasies of sexual liberation and proximity to nature during the summers of 1909-12, just as Gauguin had attempted to live closer to nature in Brittany from 1886 and later in the Pacific. Kirchner and his friends and models went to the Moritzburg Lakes in a wooded area outside of Dresden known as a gathering place for nudists. He spent several weeks there and in other landscape settings each summer sketching and painting in the landscape. Lithographs such as *Bathers (Pechstein and Fränzi)*, 1910 (D. 151) (figure 5.44), and *Men Splashing Each Other in the Reeds*, 1911 (D. 194) (figure 5.45) suggest a liberating effect of nature that ran parallel to the sensual power of the sea upon Gauguin's bathers in the zincograph *Breton Bathers*. The parallels between the poses of the figures in Kirchner's *Bathers* and Gauguin's *Breton Bathers* are striking.

According to Gustav Schiefler who wrote the first catalogue raisonné of Kirchner's prints in cooperation with the artist, Kirchner often made his lithographs directly from nature. Such a claim is startling as even small lithographic stones are very

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[42] Numerous scholars have addressed Kirchner's interest in primitivism, including Jill Lloyd and Hal Foster. See Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) and Hal Foster, "Primitive' Scenes," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 69-102.

heavy. Pechstein, however, also recorded taking a block of stone to the Mortizburg Lakes. What is most likely is that the artists drew on both sides of the same stone and printed their designs once they were back in their studios.[43]

After the 1910 Gauguin exhibition at the Galerie Arnold, non-Western sources increasingly became the raw material through which Kirchner began to attain a highly personal, unique style.[44] Kirchner's openness to the work of other artists suggests his inclination to appropriate from a wide range of sources whatever resonated for him—not at all dissimilar to Gauguin's practice of quoting from a vast array of western and non-western sources.

**Kirchner, German Art, the Expression of Emotion, and Parallels with Gauguin**

Perhaps more than any other German artist of the period aside from Emile Nolde, Kirchner identified with national tradition, comparing himself to German old masters Cranach, Dürer, Grünewald, and even Rembrandt, who at the time was considered a quasi-German artist. Throughout his career Kirchner insisted upon his identity as a German artist. From Switzerland he wrote to Louise Schiefler, "My work is German, even if these days the gentlemen over there do not see it that way, and not French, as it is too often accused of being."[45]

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[43] Frances Carey and Antony Griffiths, *The Print in Germany 1880-1933: The Age of Expressionism* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1984), 35.

[44] Ibid., 357.

[45] Wolfgang Henze, ed., in collaboration with Annemarie Dube-Heynig and Magdelena Kraemer-Noble, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Gustav Schiefler, Briefwechsel 1910-1935/8* (Stuttart: Belser, 1990), 710.

Magdalena M. Moeller has written about the essence of German art, that unlike French art, it does not look for the harmony of outward appearance, but rather for the mystery hidden within the external form.[46] In 1925, in his statement for Paul Westheim's book *What Artists Think,* Kirchner emphasized what he perceived as the essential difference between French and German artists' approach to their subjects:

> How fundamentally different are the Germanic and Romanesque approaches to artistic creation. The Romance artist takes his form from the object, from its form in nature. The Teuton creates his from imagination, from his inner vision, and the form of visible nature is for him a symbol. The model or young girl will always be recognizable in a Madonna by Renoir. But his German contemporary, Hans von Marées, will produce a goddess from a tart. For the Southern artist, beauty lies in appearances, but the Teuton seeks out what lies beneath.[47]

I would suggest that part of the appeal of Gauguin for Kirchner was his identity as an artist living apart from French society. Gauguin, after all, always emphasized his Peruvian rather than his French roots, so it would have been possible for Kirchner to have admired Gauguin not as a French artist, but as one who lived outside of the bounds of society, just as he himself did.

A further quotation from Kirchner clarifies his desire to find the soul of things and to lay it bare in his art:

> My goal was always to express emotion and experience with large and simple forms and clear colors…I wanted to express the richness and joy of living, to paint humanity at work at play, in its reactions and interreactions and to express love as well as hatred.[48]

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[46] Lloyd and Moeller, eds., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years*, 24.

[47] Ibid., 25.

[48] From a letter written to the New York dealer Curt Valentin on the occasion of Kirchner's first one-man show in America. Translated in full in "A Letter from Ernst Ludwig Kirchner," *The Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin*, vol. 42, no. 8 (February 21, 1953): 37-38.

Kirchner's approach is nearly parallel to the attitude toward his art that Gauguin expressed in correspondence to numerous friends, particularly Vincent van Gogh. For example, in 1888 he wrote, "I absolutely agree with you about the unimportance of exactness in art. Art is an abstraction, unfortunately one becomes less and less understood."[49] Later, after their separation in Arles, Gauguin described his work from Le Pouldu:

> What I've been doing particularly this year is simple peasant children, walking unconcernedly by the sea with their cows. Only since I don't like the *tromp l'oeil* of the open air, or of anything else, I try to put into these desolate figures the savageness I see in them and that is also in me…In art, truth is what a person feels in the state of mind he happens to be in. Those who wish to or are able to can dream. Let those who wish to or are able to abandon themselves to their dreams.[50]

In their statements, both artists imply that their primary goal was to find a way to portray in their art unseen, internal feelings and emotions, and to express the nature of the artist and his subject, rather than reproducing nature itself. I would argue that each artist achieved this in his graphic oeuvre.

The parallels between Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* and Kirchner's graphic works—particularly his lithographs printed on yellow paper—are numerous. Kirchner understood that Gauguin's creation of the *Volpini Suite* was a self-conscious manifesto, intended to disseminate the artist's ideas to his admirers, and to be sold to believers who would support his artistic activity. I have argued that Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* inspired Kirchner's symbolic use of decorative form and intense all-over color—particularly

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[49] Gauguin to Vincent van Gogh, Pont-Aven, 24 or 25 July 1888, Paul Gauguin, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin*, ed. Victor Merhlès (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), 200. "L'art est une abstraction, malheureusement en deviant de plus en plus incompris."

[50] Gauguin to Vincent van Gogh, Le Pouldu, c. 20 October 1889, Gauguin, *Gauguin by Himself*, ed. Thomson, 106-7.

yellow—, as well as the liberating effect of non-Western art, and perhaps as well his exploitation of experimental printmaking as a way to liberate creative inspiration.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have traced the influence of Gauguin's *Volpini Suite* upon the artist's subsequent woodcuts, *Noa Noa*, on the prints of his followers of the Pont-Aven School, and on the Nabis. While Gauguin's significance to the Pont-Aven School and the Nabis is well documented, the specific influence of the *Volpini Suite* has not been addressed. This chapter also compares the *Volpini Suite* with the early prints and paintings of Aristide Maillol, who was profoundly affected by the Volpini exhibition. Although connections between Gauguin and Maillol's sculpture have been made, no one has commented upon the clear parallels between Maillol's early work and the *Volpini Suite*. Finally, in this chapter, I have argued that the *Volpini Suite* played a significant role in Kirchner's production of lithographs on yellow paper, between 1910 and 1920.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have attempted to demonstrate the central position of the *Volpini Suite* within Gauguin's oeuvre and its influence on artists who followed him. What began as a vehicle for self-promotion burgeoned into an elaborate self-portrait of the artist created at critical juncture in his career. I have argued that working for the first time in a print medium pushed Gauguin further stylistically than he had dared to go before. Paintings such as *Woman with a Mango (Vahine no te vi)*, 1892 (W. 1964, 449) (figure C.1) and *Woman by the Sea (Vahine no te miti)*, 1892 (W. 465) (figure C.2) from the artist's first Tahitian sojourn could not have existed without the experience the artist gained by producing the *Volpini Suite*. Both canvases have as their subjects monumental female forms framed against flat, decorative backgrounds, as do most of the prints in the *Volpini Suite*. The swaying, musical form of the figure in *Woman with a Mango* echoes the lyrical poses of figures in Gauguin's Martinique prints, as does his palette of dark blues and blacks against a brilliant golden background. *Woman by the Sea* is a Tahitian reinvention of *Breton Bathers*; once again, Gauguin presented a figure viewed from the back, framed against a brilliant yellow background, posed at a brief distance from the sea which was described by a decorative pattern of swirls.

In the Introduction, I set the stage for the discussion of the suite by examining the tradition of the print portfolio and in France and particularly lithographic portfolios of late nineteenth-century Paris. I have argued that Manet's prints were particularly influential on Gauguin, particularly his 1862 portfolio of etchings published by Cadart, which reproduced several of his most important paintings to date. Also important to Gauguin were Manet's illustrations that accompanied Stéphane Mallarmé's translation of

Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* of 1875. In Chapter One, I addressed Gauguin's attraction to prints, and the essential role played by Theo van Gogh in his emergence as a printmaker. I discussed the technique of zincography, identified the *Volpini Suite* as an essential aspect of Gauguin's self-promotion, and presented a thorough discussion of the role that myth-making and self-invention played throughout his art and writing.

In Chapter Two, I analyzed each print within the *Volpini Suite*, examining the works of art that each print refers to, including drawings, paintings, ceramics and woodcarvings. I have discussed the *Suite* as a resumé of the artist's work at mid-career, and as a visual record of his travels and most important themes. I have located hand-colored impressions of ten of the compositions in the *Suite*, locating examples that were not identified in Kornfeld's catalogue raisonné of Gauguin's prints, and have discussed the palette that Gauguin employed in these unique impressions. In addition to citing numerous other scholars' conclusions about the imagery in the suite, I proposed several new hypotheses about the images. For example, in alluding to the American author, Edgar Allan Poe in *Dramas of the Sea: The Maelstrom*, and one of La Fontaine's fables in *Cicadas and Ants*—I have suggested that Gauguin was associating himself with the protagonists in the short story and the fable. Like the cicadas in "Cicadas and Ants", Gauguin envisioned himself as a quintessential avant-garde artist existing on the margins of society and like the fisherman in "The Maelstrom," he was able to find salvation only in making art that described his proximity to nature.

The canary yellow paper that Gauguin employed is one of the most striking aspects of the suite. Strangely, however, this critical feature of the prints has largely been glossed over in the existing literature, explained simply as being influenced by Japanese

prints or popular posters of the period. In Chapter Three I endeavored to provide specific examples of ukiyo-e and surinomo in which yellow plays a significant role, and pointed to nineteenth-century French publications on Japanese art and the association of the color yellow with Japonisme. In addition, I tracked down specific posters published by Emile Lévy in the Bibliothèque Nationale that may have been influential insofar as Gauguin's choice of paper. I also cited Felix Buhot's album *Japonisme* of 1885, a group of ten etchings printed on brilliant yellow paper that has not previously been associated with the *Volpini Suite*, but may have been a model for Gauguin. Without duplicating the vast literature on Vincent van Gogh and Gauguin, I investigated the impact of the all-important color yellow in Vincent's paintings of 1888 upon Gauguin's album of zincographs, made just weeks after the artists' period in Arles.

A discussion of the *Volpini Suite* would be incomplete without an examination of Emile Bernard's album of zincographs, *Les Bretonneries*, also available for viewing at the Volpini exhibition of 1889. In Chapter Four I discussed the dialogue between Bernard and Gauguin and the mutual influence that the two artists exerted upon one another's prints.

Chapter Five was devoted to the legacy of the *Volpini Suite* in which I discussed the influence that the suite had upon Gauguin's later prints, particularly *Noa Noa*. I addressed the prints of the Pont-Aven School and the Nabis, which clearly owe a tremendous debt to the *Volpini Suite*. No one has undertaken a comparison of Aristide Maillol's early paintings and prints and the *Suite*, but the Volpini exhibition had an enormous impact upon the young Maillol, and I proposed that the artist had Gauguin's prints in mind when executing his early work. Perhaps most daringly, I also compared

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Brücke and Berlin lithographs printed on yellow paper with the *Volpini Suite*. Kirchner's appreciation of Gauguin is evident in his poster advertising the exhibition of Gauguin's paintings at the Galerie Arnold in which he reproduced Gauguin's portrait of Aline Gauguin. Kirchner chose to have the woodcut printed on yellow paper, just as the painting employed a yellow background. In the years that followed, the German artist printed many of his lithographs on yellow paper, and I argued that he associated the color with the avant-garde and with a close proximity to nature that Gauguin suggested in his images of Brittany, Martinique, and eventually Tahiti.

Finally, I think it not an overstatement to suggest that the creation of the *Volpini Suite* initiated a new way of seeing for Gauguin. The significance of the prints was appreciated by artists who followed in his footsteps, each a pioneer of modernism in a distinctive way.

Unfortunately, in the vast literature on Gauguin, the artist's prints are almost always considered secondary to his paintings. Indeed, within the oeuvres of artists who are painters as well as printmakers, prints are typically regarded as tangential to their paintings; the possibility that prints can exert an influence on subsequent paintings, and that the act of printmaking can dramatically alter an artist's perspective is seldom acknowledged. In this study, I have endeavored to restore the *Volpini Suite* to a central place within Gauguin's oeuvre, and to prove that the zincographs heralded a new direction in his art.

## Appendix I

### Hand-colored impressions of the *Volpini Suite*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| K. 1 | ***Design for a Plate*** | Indianapolis Museum of Art<br>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston<br>Metropolitan Museum of Art<br>Art Institute of Chicago |
| K. 2 | ***Dramas of the Sea, Brittany*** | 1. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY<br>2. Washington, D. C. Library of Congress (Extremely faded. Very little coloring—only green in the area below the figures.) |
| K. 3 | ***Dramas of the Sea: Maelstrom*** | Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam |
| K. 4 | ***Bathers in Brittany*** | Museum of Fine Arts, Boston |
| K. 5 | ***Cicadas and Ants*** | 1. Private Collection, Atlanta (Purchased at Sotheby's NY, Nov.1, 2001, lot 296)<br>2. Private Collection, United States (Purchased at Christie's NY, Nov. 2, 1999, lot 9) |
| K. 6 | ***Pastorale Martinique*** | No known impression |
| K. 7 | ***Joys of Brittany*** | 1. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston<br>2. National Museum, Belgrade, Serbia |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| K. 8 | ***Breton Women Beside a Fence*** | Private Collection of Linda and Mel Teetz, Atlanta, GA<br>(Purchased at Sotheby's, NY, May 3, 2002, lot 112) |
| K. 9 | ***Arlésiennes*** | Private Collection, London<br>(Purchased at Christie's, London, Feb. 7, 2002, lot 337) |
| K. 10 | ***Washerwomen*** | 1. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston<br><br>2. Private Collection<br>(Purchased at Piasa, Paris, June 11, 1998; formerly collection of H. M. Petiet, Paris) |
| K. 11 | ***Human Misery*** | Private Collection, London<br>(Purchased at Christie's London, Feb. 4, 2002, lot 25) |

## Appendix II

## Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Lithographs Printed on Yellow Paper

Of Kirchner's 458 lithographs listed in Annemarie and Wolf-Dieter Dube's catalogue raisonné of the artist's graphic work, seventy-six were printed on brilliant yellow paper, similar in color to the paper used for Gauguin's *Volpini Suite*. I have listed those prints below. Translations of the German titles are my own.

*Daydreaming Nude Girl* (*Träumendes nacktes Mädchen)*, 1909 (Dube 86)

*Three quarter nude, rubbing her arm (Dreiviertelakt, den Arm reibend)*, 1909 (D. 87)

*Dancing Couple (Tanzpaar)*, 1909 (D. 120)

*Variety-Dancer (Variete-Tänzerin)*, 1909 (D. 121)

*Hungarian Dance (Ungarischer Tanz),* 1909 (D. 123)

*Milliner in a Hat (Modistin mit Hut)*, 1910, (D. 138)

*Artist with Model, Sketching (Maler mit Modell, Zeichnend),* 1910 (D. 140)

*Hannah Dancing (Hannah Tanzend),* 1910 (D. 141)

*Gerty with Mask and Wineglass (Gerty mit Maske und Weinglas)*, 1910 (D. 143)

*Girls Making Themselves Up (Toilettemachende Mädchen)*, 1910 (D. 144)

*Bending Dancer (Rumpfbeugende Tänzerin),* 1910 (D. 152)

*Blankenese*, 1910 (D. 155)

*On the Alster (An der Alster)*, 1910 (D. 156)

*Men Splashing Each Other in the Reeds (Sich Spritzende Männer im Schilf),* 1911 (D. 194) (on white or yellow paper)

*Two Women (In a Boat) (Zwei Frauen (in einem Boot))*, 1912 (D. 220)

*Three Women in a Café-Garden (Drei Frauen im Cafegarten)*, 1914 (D. 243)

*Musical Restaurant (Musikrestaurant)*, 1914 (D. 245)

*Coquettes on Kurfürstendamm (Kokotten am Kurfürstendamm),* 1914 (D. 249)

*Leipziger Street, Crossing (Leipziger Strasse, Kreuzung),* 1914 (D. 250)

*Riders in Grunewald (Reiter im Grunewald)*, 1914 (D. 251)

*Estate Staberhof (Gut Staberhof),* 1914 (D. 252)

*Dancing Nudes (Tanzende Akte),* 1914 (D. 257)

*Nude standing near the Furnace (Stehender Akt am Ofen),* 1915 (D. 263)

*Two Models at the Window (Zwei Akte am Fenster,* 1915 (D. 264)

*The other (breast suitor) 'Busenfreier' (Der Andere Busenfreier)*, 1915 (D. 274)
(on white or yellow paper)

*Nude Man and Girl (Nackter Mann und Mädchen),* 1915 (D. 275)

*Man with Two Girls (Mann mit zwei Mädchen),* 1915 (D. 278)

*Self Portrait with Cigarette (Selbstbildnis mit Zigarette),* 1915 (D. 280)

*Portrait of Mrs. Fehr (Bildnis Frau Fehr),* 1915 (D. 289) (on white or yellow paper)

*Billiard Player (Billardspieler)*, 1915 (Sch. 290)

*Billiard Hall with Player from Behind (Billardsall mit Spieler von Hinten),* 1915 (D. 291)

*At the Zoo, Halle (Am Zoo, Halle),* 1915 (Sch. 293)

*Landscape near Halle (Landschaft bei Halle),* 1915 (D. 294)

*Artillerymen in the bath (Artilleriste bad),* 1915 (D. 296) (on white or yellow paper)

*Mustering of Soldiers (Soldatenmusterung),* 1915 (D. 297)

*Execution (Exekution),* 1915 (D. 298) (on white or yellow paper)

*Assault  Sturmangriff*, 1915 (D. 299)

*Night Patrol on Horseback (Patrouillenritt am Abend)*, 1915 (D. 303)

*Rearing Horse with Rider (Steigendes Pferd mit Reiter),* 1915 (D. 307) (on white or yellow paper)

*Two Panthers (Zwei Panther),* 1916 (D. 309) (on white or yellow paper)

*Frankfurt*, 1916 (D. 311)

*Firs in the Taunus (Taunustannen)*, 1916 (D. 312)

*Forest Path (Waldweg)*, 1916 (D. 313)

*Free Port in Frankfurt, A. M. (Freihafen Frankfurt A. M).,* 1916 (D. 316) (on white or yellow paper)

*Nude Man with Woman (Nackter Mann mit Frau)*, 1916 (D. 321)

*Harvesting Fruit (Obsternte)*, 1916 (D. 324)

*Head of Sternheim (Kopf Sternheim)*, 1916 (D. 328) (Dube notes that the first state was pulled by hand and printed on white or yellow paper)

*Fanny in armchair(Fanny Wock) (Fanny im Lehnstuhl (Fanny Wocke))*, 1916 (D. 331)

*Girls (Mädchen)*, 1919 (D. 344)

*The Woman Teacher (Die Lehrerin)*, 1919 (D. 345)

*Artist Drawing (Self Portrait), (Zeichnender Maler (Selbstbildnis))*, 1919 (D. 348) (on white or yellow paper)

*Postman (Briefträger)*, 1919 (D. 349)

*Three Children in a Doorway (Drei Kinder in der Tür)*, 1919 (D. 355)

*Boy with Cat (Knabe mit Katze)*, 1919 (D. 362) (on white or yellow paper)

*Mountain Pasture with Cows and Herdsmen (Bergweide mit Kühen und Sennen)*, 1919 (D. 372) (on white or yellow paper)

*Alp with Animals (Alp mit Tieren)*, 1919 (D. 374)

*Mountain Range (Berggruppe)*, 1919 (D. 376) (on white or yellow paper)

*Else Thöny (Large Head) (Else Thöny (Grosser Kopf))*, 1920 (D. 389) (on white or yellow paper)

*Family at the Table (Familie am Tisch)*, 1920 (D. 391) (on white or yellow paper)

*Girl Dancing (Tanzende Mädchen)*, 1920 (D. 395) on white or yellow paper)

*Alpine Dance with two Hand Organs (Alptanz mit zwei Handorglern)*, 1920 (D. 397) (on white or yellow paper)

*Spinner and Girl (Spinnerin und Mädchen)*, 1920 (D. 400) (on white or yellow paper)

*Spring-time project (Frühjahrsarbeit)*, 1920 (D. 402) (on white or yellow paper)

*Timber Line (Baumgrenze)*, 1920 (D. 404)

*Portrait of a Girl (Daughter L.) (Mädchenbildnis (Tochter L.))*, 1921 (D. 408) (on pink or yellow paper)

*Portrait of Nele van de Velde (Porträt Nele van de Velde)*, 1921 (D. 411) (on white or yellow paper)

*Boy (Bube)*, 1921 (D. 414) (on white or yellow paper)

*Ophelia*, 1921 (D. 415)

*Herd of Goats (Ziegenherde)*, 1922 (D. 416) (on white or yellow paper)

*Seated Farmers (Sitzende Bauern)*, 1922 (D. 417) (on white or yellow paper)

*Two Farmers (Zwei Bauern)*, 1922 (D. 419) (on white or yellow paper)

*Woman and Girl (Frau und Mädchen)*, 1922 (D. 423)

*Mariele*, 1923 (D. 427) (on white or yellow paper)

*Dancing scene (Tanzszene)*, 1927 (D. 440) (on white or yellow paper)

*Skater (Schlittschuhläufer)*, 1931 (D. 449) (on white or yellow paper)

*Poster for the Exhibition of Art of the Brücke Group at Emil Richter, Dresden (Plakat der Ausstellung der Künstler-Gruppe Brücke bei Emil Richter)*, Dresden, 1907 (D. 456)

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