

Paul Gauguin

PAGES FROM THE PACIFIC

Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers

In association with the Art Institute of Chicago
Auckland City Art Gallery 1995

Paul Gauguin: Pages from the Pacific is published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name organised by The Art Institute of Chicago and presented by the Auckland City Art Gallery, 4 August – 15 October 1995.

Exhibition Design: Ken Thomson and Jill Godwin



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We are grateful for the enthusiasm with which the Auckland City Art Gallery greeted our proposal which resulted in the present exhibition and publication. Our sincere thanks to Christopher Johnstone and the Gauguin team: Jenny Balle, Jeremy Dart, Amanda Gibbs, Beth Harman, Mei Hill, Catherine Lomas, Rod MacLeod, Chris Seager, John Robertson, Roger Taberner, Chad Taylor and Ken Thomson.

In preparing the exhibition and publication to an exceedingly tight schedule we relied greatly on the assistance of our colleagues at The Art Institute of Chicago. We wish to thank: Susan Rossen, Publications; Sanna Evans, Donna Forrest and Mollie Reiss, Copy Centre; Robert Hashimoto, Anne Morse, Pamela Stuedemann and Julie Zeftel, Imaging and Technical Services; Mary Solt, Museum Registration; Geri Banik, European Painting; Caesar Citraro, Jennifer Clarke, Suzanne McCullagh, Chris O'Shea, Stephanie Skestos, Harriet Stratis and Gloria Teplitz, Prints and Drawings; and Dorothy Schroeder, Exhibitions and Budgets.

FOREWORD

The exhibition *Gauguin: Pages from the Pacific* and this book which accompanies and documents it are the result of a rare instance of collegial cooperation between two extremely distant and different art museums – The Art Institute of Chicago and the Auckland City Art Gallery.

The exhibition, the flagship event in the Auckland City Art Gallery's programme to mark the centenary of Gauguin's 10-day stay in Auckland in 1895, was organised by The Art Institute of Chicago. Douglas Druick, Searle Curator of European Paintings and Prince Trust Curator of Prints and Drawings not only responded positively to my request to borrow a group of works by Gauguin he went further by offering to organise an entire exhibition. As a leading Gauguin scholar Douglas Druick believed that an exhibition to acknowledge the significance of Gauguin's visit to Auckland was well deserved.

Inspired by the fact that Gauguin made some of his characteristic sketches of Maori art in the Auckland Museum, Douglas Druick and his colleague Peter Kort Zegers, Research Curator, Prints and Drawings, developed this masterful survey of Gauguin's works on paper which demonstrates how Gauguin used the various sources for his paintings, especially those of and from non-European art contexts. The outstanding and unique exhibition they assembled, almost exclusively from the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago and Edward McCormick Blair, is marvellously described and interpreted, interwoven with Gauguin's life and career, in the eloquent and informative essay published here. This catalogue presents an almost encyclopedic summary of the extensive research undertaken by Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers over recent years and is the first time that it has been published in its entirety.

I offer my warmest thanks and appreciation and that of the staff of the Auckland City Art Gallery to The Art Institute of Chicago, director and president James N. Wood, for organising the exhibition for Auckland. It is entirely due to the efforts and enthusiasm of Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers, that the exhibition and this catalogue were possible. I also acknowledge here their team at The Art Institute of Chicago. It is my hope that the Auckland City Art Gallery will, one day, be able to return the favour.

I gratefully acknowledge important loans to the exhibition from Carrick Hill, Adelaide, South Australia and courtesy of Gilles Artur, Musée Gauguin, Tahiti.

To Edward McCormick Blair I offer my warmest thanks and appreciation. The outstanding group of works he has so generously lent has ensured both the highest quality and the greatest public appeal.

Simpson Grierson Law generously sponsored the exhibition and I am grateful to Steve Bridges and Robyn McNaught and the marketing committee, Chair Peter Stubbs, for their enthusiastic support of the project. I also thank David Kirkpatrick of Simpson Grierson and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs for their respective roles in securing New Zealand Government Indemnity for the exhibition.

I am very grateful to Chad Taylor who met the dual challenges of a tight schedule and a slender budget to design this attractive and affordable publication.

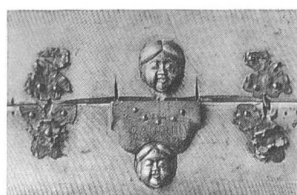
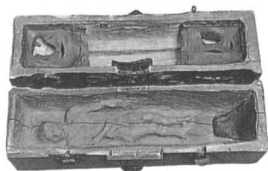
Finally I thank everyone at the Gallery who contributed to the development of the Gauguin centenary programme and to *Gauguin: Pages from the Pacific*.

Christopher Johnstone
Director

Paul Gauguin

PAGES FROM THE PACIFIC

INTRODUCTION



1a-d. Paul Gauguin, *Decorated Wood Box*, 1884. Pear wood with iron hinges, leather and red stain. Various views and details. Private collection.



2. Edgar Degas, *Aux Ambassadeurs: Mlle Bécot* (detail), 1877/78. Lithograph. The Art Institute of Chicago.

One hundred years ago, Paul Gauguin set sail from France for Tahiti, never to return. En route to his destination, he stopped in Auckland, New Zealand. Here, as its visitors' book attests, Gauguin visited the Auckland Art Gallery. More importantly for his art, however, he also visited the Auckland Institute and Museum, where he discovered its rich collection of Maori *taonga*. In shorthand scribbles in his sketchbook, the artist made visual notes to himself of the salient features of those objects that attracted him. This was a practice he had been following for years, both when visiting museums that housed the art and artifacts of past cultures as well as when "in the field," inhabiting the living cultures of Brittany, Martinique, and Tahiti.

An artistic habit reflective of a larger contemporary fascination with cultural difference, Gauguin's note-taking had a two-fold aim. On the one hand, he felt that in the process of representing he gained access to his subjects and almost magically bridged the distance separating him from others — whether the psychological gulf between himself and the contemporary inhabitants of foreign cultures or the temporal void that separated the ancient objects that spoke to him. On the other, such work constituted seeds for those paintings, prints and drawings that he would subsequently create with a view to public display — seeds he carried with him always, wherever he went in search of the ideal climate for what he termed their "germination."

Gauguin acknowledged the intensely personal nature of his sketches when, in "Avant et Après," drafted at the very end of his life, he 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. 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 do 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.

An investigation of Gauguin's sketchbook drawings and studies after nature bears out the inherent truth of this seeming overstatement. The fragmentary forms found in the sketchbooks are highly revealing clues to the artist's abiding passions and creative sources; differently revelatory are his studies from nature which, in their inclusions and elisions, disclose what Gauguin found of interest and, perhaps more importantly, what he searched for in vain. But while these documents of the "inner man" are, like the artist's letters, largely confined to paper, oil painting is not the exclusive domain of his "public" artistic persona. Almost from the beginning of his career and increasingly toward its end, Gauguin made prints and drawings that, like his paintings and sculpture, were intended as public statements, designed — to use his own terminology — to reveal what he wanted to reveal.

Gauguin's "public" graphic statements are, like his paintings, often constructed of diverse elements, syntheses of his

experiences of art and people as recorded in his “private work.” But more so than do his paintings, these works — and particularly the prints and so-called monotypes — reveal the nature of the artist’s underlying creative drive. Always at work whether making “high” art or involved in “craft” activities such as carving and decorating commonplace utensils, Gauguin was creatively restless. By virtue of both their modest scale and their material nature, prints and drawings accommodated his need for experimentation, encouraging a technical inventiveness and daring that painting, with its high academic ranking, seemed to forbid. Indeed, it was only in the area of ceramics, deemed by his contemporaries to be more “craft” than “art,” that Gauguin allowed himself comparable creative freedom with similarly startling results.

In an age of dramatic technological progress, notably in the area of photomechanical reproduction and image dissemination, such graphic experimentation took on a particular expressive valence. Reviving the medium of woodcut, Gauguin signified nostalgia for a pre-industrial past. Similarly, the graphic techniques he invented all seem to imbue the forms they produced with a sense of loss; the images appear to fade away before our eyes.

That was how the world appeared to Gauguin. He saw the values he espoused and the creative self he wished to be threatened with extinction by the seemingly unstoppable forces of progress and the homogeneity of modern life. He attempted the impossible: to escape from the present to a cultural past in order to make an art of the future. He took refuge in art that spoke of earlier civilizations; he sought out exotic places where the past purportedly still lived. Inevitably, he was disappointed. Finally, he effected his escape imaginatively, by inventing dreams of a world that never was. Expressed in a new formal language that was born of art of the past, Gauguin’s escapist fantasies pointed the way to the future, to modernism and the art of this century.

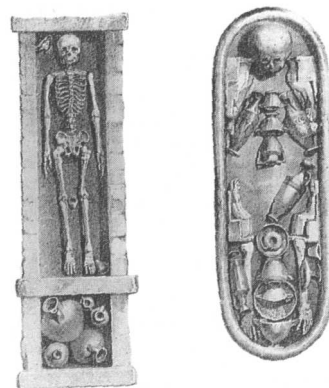
Marking the one-hundredth anniversary of Gauguin’s final flight from Europe and his short stay in Auckland, the exhibition of the artist’s works on paper that this publication accompanies reveals Gauguin’s “private” and “public” selves, tracing his career and the adventure that he created out of his life and art.

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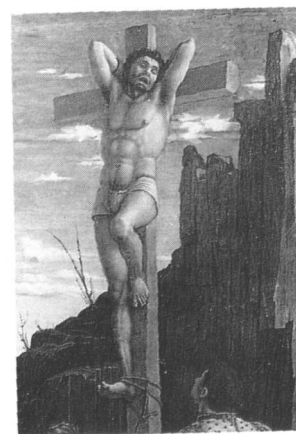
The text that follows draws on our papers, “The Kampong and the Pagoda: Gauguin at the Universal Exhibition, 1889,” in *Gauguin: Actes du colloque Gauguin, Musée d’Orsay, 11-13 January 1989*. Paris, La Documentation Française, 1991; “Facing the Natives: Gauguin’s ‘Documentation’ of Tahitians, 1891-1893,” paper given at the symposium *Imaging the body: Art and Science in Modern Culture*, The University of Chicago, April 2-4, 1992; and on our current research for a publication dealing with Gauguin and his concept of the “studio of the south.”



3. Edgar Degas, *The Orchestra of the Opéra* (detail), 1869/70. Musée d’Orsay, Paris.



4a & b. Graves with human remains and various objects. From Alex Brongniart, *Traité des arts céramiques...* (Paris, 1877), Atlas, pl. 2, fig. 1 and fig. 3.



5a. Andrea Mantegna (Italian 1430/31-1506). *The Crucifixion* (detail), 1456/59. Oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Unless otherwise indicated, figs 5a – 14b are from the *Album Walter*, Musée du Louvre, Paris, dating predominantly from 1888 to 1893.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

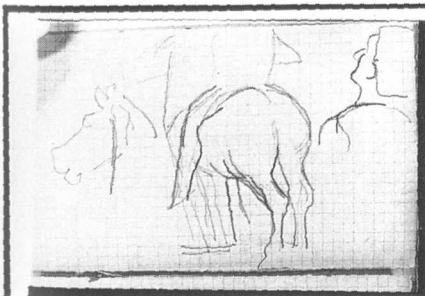
1848 - 1886



5b. Andrea Mantegna, (Italian 1430/31-1506).
The Crucifixion (detail), 1456/59.
Oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



5c. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook* page 52, with
figure on cross and legs after Andrea Mantegna,
"The Crucifixion." Graphite.



5d. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook* page 52 (verso),
with Soldier on horseback after Andrea
Mantegna, "The Crucifixion." Graphite.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Paul Gauguin did not study to be an artist. Self-taught, he apparently began painting around the age of twenty-five, as a form of recreation. In this initiation, as well as in his extraordinary subsequent development as a painter, draftsman, sculptor, ceramicist and printmaker, the facts of Gauguin's rather remarkable personal history played a decisive role.

Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin was born in Paris in 1848, the only son of Clovis Gauguin, a political journalist, and Aline Chazal, daughter of the radical feminist author Flora Tristan. The following year, Clovis Gauguin died while sailing with his family to Peru, where his wife had relatives. Aline and her children stayed in Lima for four years, before returning to France to settle first in Orléans and then in Paris, where Aline worked as a seamstress. Schooled in Orléans and Paris, Paul first aspired to take the entrance exams to the naval academy. When this became impossible, he enlisted, at age seventeen, as an officer's candidate in the merchant marines and set sail on a fifteen-week voyage to Rio de Janeiro.

From 1866 through 1870, Gauguin sailed around the world in the service of the merchant and French navies. Like many sailors, he passed the long hours of inactivity on shipboard working with his hands, building model ships and engaged in other of the traditional seamen's handicrafts that involved carving and decorating tools and utensils.

When war broke out between France and Prussia in 1870, Gauguin was at sea on a "scientific mission" to the Arctic Circle presided over by the Emperor's cousin together with historian Ernest Renan. This would be his last naval voyage; early the following year, he was released from military service. The circumstances of his life had changed. His mother had died in 1867, leaving Paul and his sister under the legal guardianship of a family friend, Gustave Arosa, a businessman with antiquarian interests involved in pioneering new techniques for the photographic reproduction of artworks. The war had directly impacted on the inheritance that Paul had received on turning twenty-one: the Prussians had destroyed his mother's house in Saint-Cloud outside of Paris and, with it, the small collection of Peruvian vases, the figurines in massive silver, the library and family papers. In seeking to map his future, Gauguin turned to the man in whose charge his mother had left him.

Gustave Arosa's influence was critical to Gauguin's development in his early twenties: It was through Arosa that Gauguin got a job in a brokerage house; it was at the Arosa family home that he made the acquaintance of Mette Gad, the Danish woman who became his fiancée; and it was Arosa's passion for art — his art publications; his collection of ceramics; and his paintings by Corot, Courbet, Daumier, Delacroix and Jongkind — that helped catalyze Gauguin's turn to painting in the months before his wedding.

Over the next six years, Gauguin and Mette began a family (two sons and a daughter), which he supported through his work at the stock exchange. The great pleasure Gauguin took in his domestic life is reflected in the many drawings he made of Mette and their babies. Intimate, tender and extraordinarily observant (see cat. no. 1), Gauguin's drawings of his children take on special significance when considered in light of his later statement that drawing provided the means to "learn the particular character" of the subject at hand; as later in Brittany, Martinique and Tahiti, so now the act of recording what he saw provided him empathic access to a foreign state of consciousness.

Gauguin's sketches, watercolors and sculptures of family members were also testimony to his growing artistic ambitions. These were fostered by his acquaintance with art critics, sculptors and the Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro, another connection made through Arosa, who had begun collecting his paintings in the early 1870s. Following his guardian's example, Gauguin began collecting work by Pissarro, some of which he loaned to the fourth Impressionist exhibition, held in the spring of 1879. Here Gauguin, at the invitation of both Pissarro and Edgar Degas, showed a marble bust he had carved of his firstborn, Emil.

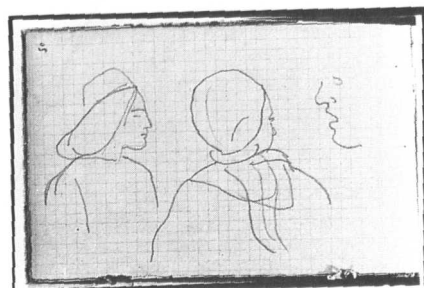
Collaboration with the Impressionists accelerated Gauguin's growing commitment to art. His collecting activity increased as did his own work, shown at the fifth, sixth and seventh Impressionist exhibitions, held, respectively, in 1880, 1881 and 1882. While his paintings of this period attest the influence of his mentor Pissarro as well as of Degas, a more rugged individuality is revealed in the few wooden sculptures he also made. Less dependent on immediate models, Gauguin here seemed to draw upon his earlier shipboard whittling; the resulting work has a roughness characteristic of what was considered "primitive" art.

The collapse of the stock market in January 1882 put Gauguin out of a job and thus inadvertently strengthened his resolve to devote himself to his art. But by 1883, he was a father of four and Mette was expecting their fifth child. The need to make money would lead him, in the years immediately following, to entertain a variety of commercial endeavors, each unsuccessful. In his art, he would likewise explore new directions with a similar end. But while his experiments — notably the ceramics he would begin producing in 1886 — would similarly be commercial failures, they would constitute an important creative breakthrough.

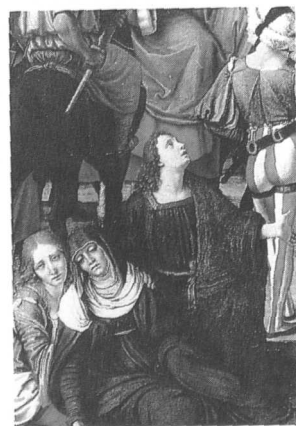
The nature of this breakthrough is announced in the strange wooden box that Gauguin made in 1884 (see fig. 1a-d). In its shape, scale and possible function as a container of valuables, this fascinating object echoes sewing cases, tobacco boxes, and chests that Gauguin and other seamen had made on board ship. Iconographically, the box suggests a voyage of another kind, one across cultures and over time. To decorate the front and top of his box, Gauguin employed motifs taken from various of Degas's compositions dealing with the ballet and *café concert* (see figs. 2 & 3). In contrast to these images of contemporary Parisian entertainments, the back of the box features two inlaid Japanese *netsuke*. While the presence of *netsuke* reflects the interest Degas and his fellow Impressionists took in Japanese art, their placement beside the box's hinges suggests the indebtedness of Impressionist



6a & b. Sandro Botticelli (Italian c.1445-1510) *Lorenzo Tornabuoni presented by Grammar to Prudentia and the other Liberal Arts* (details), c.1486. Fresco. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



6c. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook page 50*, with figures after Sandro Botticelli, "Lorenzo Tornabuoni presented by Grammar...", "Graphite.



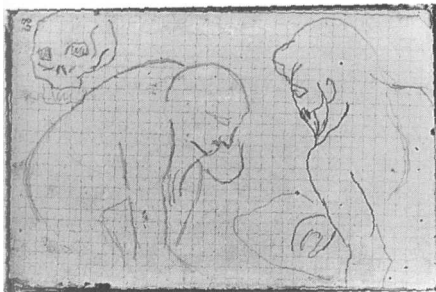
7a. Andrea Solario (Italian, 1470/74-1514), *The Crucifixion* (details), 1503. Tempera and oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



7b. Andrea Solario (Italian, 1470/74-1514). *The Crucifixion* (details), 1503. Tempera and oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



7c. Paul Gauguin, Sketchbook page 48, with seated and crouching soldiers and skull after Andrea Solario, "The Crucifixion." Graphite.



7d. Paul Gauguin, Sketchbook page 47 (verso), with figure with upturned head after Andrea Solario, "The Crucifixion" and with figures from Eugène Delacroix, "The Shipwreck of the Don Juan," 1840 (Paris, Louvre Museum). Graphite.

invention to a culture that the French at the time considered relatively "primitive." The joke is underscored by the fact that the *netsuke* Gauguin has employed are *Okame* masks — representations of the goddess of mirth (see fig. 1c). Their light mood literally disappears when the box is opened to reveal a prostrate human figure, unmasking the wooden container to be a coffin (see fig. 1b). While this contrast between exterior and interior iconography suggests a theme of *vanitas*, the coffin's construction can be seen to reflect a new creative strategy. For the sources for Gauguin's conceit are two plates from a recent publication on the history of ceramics (see figs. 4a & b), other images of which are recorded in his contemporary sketchbooks. The box thus reads as a metaphor of Gauguin's developing ambition to infuse contemporary art with new life by drawing upon a wide range of artistic models and traditions. These coexist in the box of 1884. Over the coming years, Gauguin would pursue their integration in an art that increasingly privileged expressive force over fidelity to appearance, "primitive" art over the post-Renaissance tradition.



8. (right) A selection of ceramic objects from the collection of Gustave Arosa, from Auguste Demmin, *Histoire de la ceramique en planches phototypiques inaltérables*, Process Arosa & Co., Paris, 1875. The Art Institute of Chicago.

BRITTANY AND MARTINIQUE

1886 - 1889

Unemployed after 1882, Gauguin was freer to work on his art but continually and often desperately in need of money. It was the prospect of "living economically" while making art that first led him to contemplate settling in Brittany; one of the poorest regions of France, it was the cheapest possible place to live, as he informed his wife, who, with the children, had taken refuge with her relatives in Copenhagen. Brittany had, in fact, for the past two decades been the site of a bustling artists' colony centered in the town of Pont Aven; it was here, in the popular Gloanec Inn, that Gauguin stayed during his first visit, in the summer of 1886.

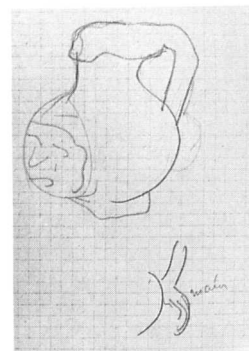
Gauguin's practice when moving to an unfamiliar locale was to attempt to absorb "the character of the people and the country," believing this "essential to painting good pictures." The process of drawing was his means of achieving this knowledge. Accordingly, the artist's first Brittany stay yielded many drawings: both small, rapidly recorded sketchbook pages as well as larger, more elaborated studies of the local population, especially women wearing their distinctive costumes, like that which he dedicated to Charles Laval, a painter he met during his stay (see cat. no. 2). These drawings became the references he consulted when subsequently devising paintings, decorative objects and the ceramics he began producing upon his return to Paris in the fall of 1886.

Faced with a harsh winter and unable to sell his work, Gauguin now planned, with his new friend Laval, an escape to a gentler clime. In March, he informed Mette of his intention to go to Panama "to live like a savage." The two artists set sail in April 1887, worked in Panama until mid-May, and then, together, left for Martinique, where they lived in a cabin outside of Saint-Pierre. From there, Gauguin wrote an artist friend back in Paris: "Currently I am making sketch upon sketch [of the Martinique islanders] in order to penetrate their character; later I'll have them pose." Gauguin's surviving sketches of the local population and the native vegetation reflect this initial activity (see cat. no. 3), while the realization of his subsequent plans to have the locals pose for him is reflected in his larger, more finished drawings of island women in typical dress and characteristic postures. As with the earlier Brittany drawings, these studies occasionally took on new life in the work that immediately followed.

The stay in Martinique was brief, and Gauguin was back in Paris by mid-November. Yet the experience of his artistic voyage, an echo of the earlier "scientific missions" to exotic locations in which he had partaken as a sailor, seems to have had a decisive impact on his view of himself and his new artistic mission. For it was shortly after his return from this experiment in "living like savages" that he first made the observation about himself that would be critical to the subsequent development of his art. "You must remember," he wrote to his wife, "that I have a dual nature, [that of] the Indian and [that of] the sensitive civilized man. The latter has disappeared [since my departure], which permits the former to take the lead." While specifically intended to counter his



9a. Anonymous, *Jug with the face of a young man in relief*, Faenza, late XVth century. Ceramic. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



9b. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook page 55, with Faenza Jug*. Graphite.



10. Paul Gauguin, *Jug in the form of a Head (Self Portrait)*, 1889. Glazed stoneware. Museum of Decorative Art, Copenhagen.



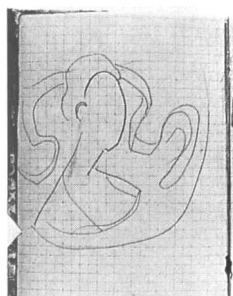
11a. Anonymous, *Cup decorated with the busts of a couple surrounded by a scroll*, Casteldurante, before 1540. Ceramic. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



11b. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook page 55 (verso) with decorated cup from Casteldurante*. Graphite.



12a. Workshop of Della Robbia, *Bust of a Woman*, Florence, first half of the XVI century. Ceramic. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



12b. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook page 56, with a Bust of Woman embellished with a scroll*. Graphite.



13a. *Statue of Hor, son of Psammetik*, Herakleopolis, XXVIth dynasty (detail). Black granite. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

wife's suggestion that he rejoin the family in Denmark, Gauguin's insistence on his fundamental dualism is the first clear sign of a move to use his Peruvian (Indian) ancestry to define himself as at once European and foreign, civilized and primitive, *Same and Other*, and in doing so to free himself from the strictures of modern European civilization.

The artist immediately applied this transgressive fantasy of mixed heritage to his art, describing his *Children Wrestling* (Private collection, Switzerland) painted in Brittany in July 1888, as "... not at all like Degas. . . [The figures are] completely Japanese, [conceived] by a Frenchman [who is also] a savage from Peru." He had come to regard Brittany, with its reputation as one of the few regions of modern France where the "primitive" culture of the past survived, as the ideal physical locus for this sensibility. To the same friend, Gauguin explained, "You are a *Parisianist*. The country is for me. I love Brittany where I find the savage, the primitive. The flat sound of my wooden clogs on the cobblestones, deep, hollow, and powerful, is the note I seek in my painting."

In the fall of 1888, Gauguin left Pont-Aven for Arles, in the south of France, to stay and work with Vincent van Gogh. Their discussions of the current "decadence" of French art and the need for its reform led to the idea of founding an artist's colony in a hospitable location far from Paris, a "studio of the south," of which Arles was only the first step. Gauguin now planned to achieve this goal by returning to Martinique. But their project was cut short by the discord that precipitated van Gogh's self-mutilation and Gauguin's abrupt return to Paris. There, his immediate plans were shaped by the prospect of the Universal Exhibition, scheduled to open in the spring of 1889. He began a series of prints that he intended to publicize his recent work and that drew on motifs which had appeared in work he had done in Brittany, Arles and Martinique (see cat. nos. 4 & 5). In these, he signaled his break from tradition by his choice of media. The technique he used was zincography, a form of lithography in which zinc plates are substituted for the lithographic stone. Associated with commercial rather than fine-art printing, zincography typically yielded a coarser graphic effect than did the more finely textured Bavarian limestone used in lithography. And rather than any of the white papers customarily used in the printing of artist's lithographs, Gauguin turned instead to a brilliant yellow paper similar to that employed at the time almost exclusively for certain types of commercial posters.

Intended as a very public statement about his art and its cultural range, Gauguin's prints were included in the group exhibition he organized with his friends at the Café Volpini to coincide with the Universal Exhibition. While the group show was a critical and financial failure, Gauguin's experience of the exposition itself marked a turning point in his career.

IN THE PARIS MUSEUMS

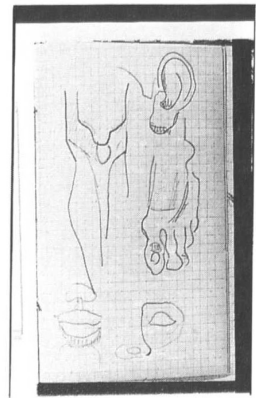
1886 - 1889

For Degas and some of the other Impressionists, Paris was a great creative stimulus: its recently created boulevards, parks, dwellings and the abundant entertainments to be found both in- and out-of-doors provided subjects that allowed them to fulfill their ambition to depict contemporary life, *la vie moderne*. Gauguin, by contrast, had rejected this goal, along with the Paris centered ideology he referred to as *parisianisme*. But while he turned his back on the modernity and notions of progress that Parisian life symbolized, the French capital nonetheless afforded him a valuable resource for his efforts to evolve a new art that, in both form and content, signaled this rejection while breaking new expressive ground. The source of this creative stimulus came not from the streets of modern Paris, but rather from the galleries of its many museums.

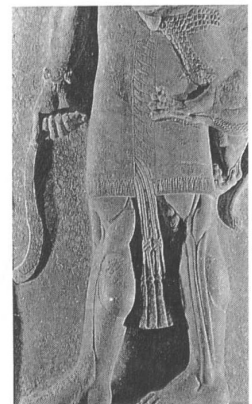
As seen in the pages of sketchbooks he used in Paris and Auckland, Gauguin seems to have been an avid museum-goer. They reveal his curiosity and wide-ranging interests. In the Louvre's painting galleries, he paid particular attention to the early Italian masters — Botticelli, Mantegna, Solario and Uccello (see figs. 5a-7d). This leaning toward the so-called "primitives" was likewise reflected in Gauguin's taste in the decorative arts, specifically his penchant for Italian ceramics, for busts, plates and cups whose appeal was doubtless fostered by his early experience of the ceramic collections of both his mother and Arosa (see fig. 8). Gauguin recorded some of these objects in his sketchbooks, later echoing them in his own ceramics as well as his paintings, prints and carvings (see figs. 9a-12b).

Gauguin's museum travels, like his early voyages, took him beyond the limits of Western European culture. Visiting the Louvre's newly refurbished galleries of Egyptian and Assyrian art, the artist made sketches (see figs. 13a - 14b) that exhibit his fascination with the way in which the ancient sculptors, in rendering the human anatomy, were guided as much by formal concerns as the desire for verisimilitude. Indeed, the common denominator of all these works is, to use the parlance of the period, their "primitive" qualities: that is, their attentiveness to representational goals other than illusionism. In this, Gauguin recognized the ambition he had recently expressed when he advised a fellow artist: "Don't copy too much after nature. Art is an abstraction: extract from nature while dreaming before it and concentrate more on creating than on the final result."

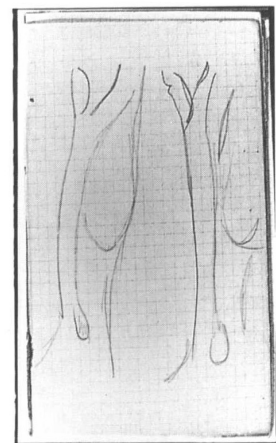
Gauguin's interest in "primitive" art led him as well to the recently opened Trocadéro museums. This complex housed the Ethnographic Museum (see fig. 15), the *Musée de la Sculpture Comparée* (Museum of Plaster Casts), as well as the recently inaugurated *Musée Khmer*, conceived to showcase sculpture — and plaster casts — from *Angkor Wat* and other Cambodian sites taken on the many recent official "scientific missions" to the new French protectorate. A similar ambition to "show its colonies to France" informed the state-organized Universal Exhibition of 1889. Featured in a special "Colonial Exhibition," the fruits of recent French colonial expansion were advertised in a number of special



13b. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook page 42 (verso)*, leg and foot of the statue of Hor; nose, mouth and eye from statue of King Rameses II. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



14a. *Propitiatory Genius of a Hero (Gilgamesh)* (detail), Late Assyrian period (end 8 BC). Alabaster. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



14b. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook page 56 (verso)*, with legs of the statue of the "Propitiatory Genius of a Hero (Gilgamesh)." Graphite.



15. Installation overview of the American galleries at the Ethnographic Museum housed in the Trocadéro, Paris, circa 1888. Photograph. Musée de l'homme, Paris.

Showcased in the foreground is the Peruvian mummy recorded by Gauguin in the *Album Walter*, p.64 (verso).



16. Paul Gauguin, *Apsara from Angkor-Wat and sketch after Botticelli, "Lorenzo Tornabuoni,"* 1889. Graphite, watercolor on paper. Private collection.



17. *Apsara, Angor Wat: Ornamental moulding*, photomechanical reproduction from Lucien Fournereau, *Les Ruines khmères: Cambodge et Siam* (Paris, 1890) pl. 37.

pavilions and exhibits that included art, artifacts and native inhabitants who had been imported to Paris both to provide ethnic entertainments and to live in facsimiles of native habitats, thus providing a living spectacle of the Other for a Parisian audience.

The “Colonial Exhibition” was nothing so much as a living museum. Gauguin, like many of his contemporaries, was fascinated by this exotic amalgam of art and life. He made sketches of the rickshaw boys from Tonkin and the plaster casts comprising the Cambodian pavilion (see figs. 16 & 17), the so-called *pagode* inspired by *Angor Wat*. Next door, he visited the Javanese Village — the *kampung* — where the principal attraction was the troupe of native dancers. Sharing the widespread enthusiasm for their stylized performance, Gauguin was riveted by the way it visually echoed the art of the *pagode*, remarking to a colleague that “my photographs of Cambodian [art] are rediscovered verbatim in the[se] ... dances.” That the photographs of the sculpture in question, doubtless acquired from Arosa, in fact depict reliefs from Borobudur, in the then Dutch colony of Java, underscores the success of the French campaign to create widespread public appreciation of its own recently won colonies. The “Colonial Exhibition” was the crowning achievement of this public-relations campaign with immediate impact on Gauguin’s life and art.

FROM BRITTANY TO TAHITI

1889 - 1891

Gauguin's experiences at the Universal Exhibition deepened the tensions that he had already begun to represent as the essential dualism of his character, shaped by his mixed heritage. On the one hand, the contrast between the success of France's proud display of technological progress, brilliantly symbolized by the new Eiffel Tower, and the dismal failure of Gauguin's exhibition staged at the *Café Volpini*, on the Exhibition grounds, exacerbated the artist's growing alienation from the culturally dominant European notions of modernity. On the other, the exhibits devoted to the life and culture of "primitive" societies — whether represented at the Colonial Exhibition or in Buffalo Bill Cody's "Wild West Show" — seemed to offer an antidote to which the brochures promoting emigration to the French colonies, distributed on the exhibition grounds, lent an aura of real possibility.

With his vision of himself and his art thus further defined, Gauguin returned to Brittany. But now, apparently, he was forced to recognize that Pont Aven was in a very real sense no more a truly primitive site than were the ethnic villages at the "Colonial Exhibition." Brittany was in fact fast becoming a living museum, the face of its culture increasingly maintained and shaped by tourism. Only months earlier, Pont Aven's museological counterpart had been inaugurated with a new installation at the Ethnographic Museum in the Trocadéro conceived "to restore to life the national costumes of old France" (see fig. 18). Long a holdout from modern civilization, the Brittany of old was facing extinction.

Disenchanted and intent on living "like a peasant by the name of savage," Gauguin left Pont Aven for the smaller and more remote village of Le Pouldu, where he lodged at an inn run by Marie Henry. His program there, as he outlined to van Gogh, was to "try to invest these desolate figures with the savage [aspect] that I see in them and which is also in me." To this end, he reported, his subjects lent their support. "Here in Brittany the peasants seem to have stepped out of the middle ages and do not seem to realize for an instant that there is a Paris and that we are in 1889." To represent this, Gauguin now occasionally incorporated images of the old Breton crucifixes and calvaries found in the region's churches in works in which he echoed their stylistic properties. This strategy of imaging the Breton present both iconographically and stylistically in terms of its past is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in Gauguin's gouache inspired by the calvary of Plougastel-Daoulas (see figs. 19a-21): although transposed from the church precinct, the recumbent body of the crucified Christ and the three mourners behind retain their identity as sculpture; but not so the mourner at Christ's head, whom Gauguin literally revived as a living participant at this roadside shrine.

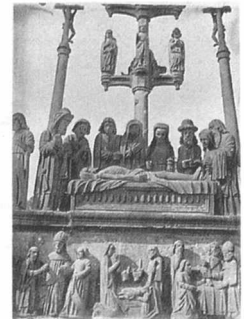
On occasion, Gauguin had practiced this strategy of representing Brittany through the filter of earlier art. Notable is *The Vision After the Sermon*, in which he apparently drew upon his memory of medieval manuscripts from Paris's National Library to create the work often cited as marking his decisive break with



18. Installation of Breton interior and costumes, Ethnographic Museum, Trocadéro, Paris, 1888. Musée de l'homme, Paris.



19a. The Calvary at Plougastel-Daoulas, 17th century. Stone. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris.



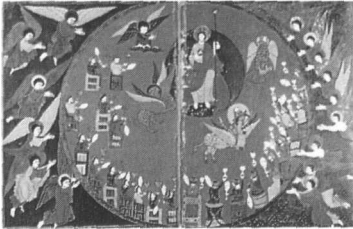
19b. The Calvary at Plougastel-Daoulas (detail)



20. Paul Gauguin, Sketchbook page with design informed by the Calvary at Plougastel-Daoulas, Tahitian figures, and animal studies, 1888/89-1891/93. Graphite and watercolor. Private collection.



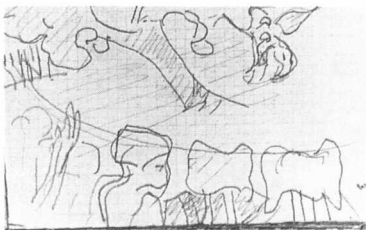
21. Paul Gauguin, *Breton Peasants at a Roadside Shrine*, 1888/89. Gouache on millboard. Private collection.



22. *The Twenty-four Elders Glorifying the Lord*, vols. 121 and 122 from the *Apocalypse of Saint-Sever*, mid 11th-century. Illustrated manuscript. Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.



23. Paul Gauguin, *Sketchbook page 3 from the Album Walter with design of "The Vision after the Sermon" (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)*, 1888. Graphite. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



24. Paul Gauguin, *The Vision After the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)*, 1888. Oil on canvas. The National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

naturalism in favor of the new expressive — “symbolist” — pictorial vocabulary (see figs. 22-24). But now he did so more frequently. Nor were artifacts from Brittany’s past the only filter through which Gauguin envisioned representing the “savage” consonance of artist and subject. He fashioned his *Breton Eve* in the anguished form of the Peruvian mummy on view in the Trocadéro’s Ethnographic Museum. And, stimulated by his recent experiences in Paris, he now discerned other affiliations in her Breton progeny. “Their costumes are . . . almost symbolic,” he wrote van Gogh. “Their faces are almost asiatic.” He insisted on this in the art he began making by giving the peasants decidedly Asian physiognomies while depicting them in attitudes seen in the Cambodian sculpture on view in Paris and in the figures in his photographs from Borobudur.

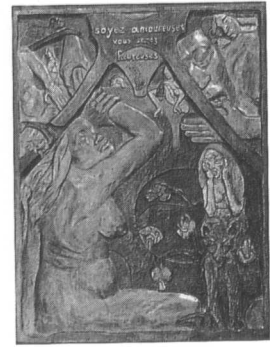
Gauguin prepared his new dealer, Vincent van Gogh’s brother Theo, for the decided shift in his art: “You know that by birth my background is Indian, Inca, and all that I do reflects this. It’s the foundation of my personality. I am seeking to set something more natural over against corrupt civilization, with the primitive as my starting point.” This was the theme of his recently completed wooden sculpture *Be in Love and You Will be Happy* (fig. 25). Here in the upper left corner Gauguin incorporated the shielded pubic area of Manet’s famous *Olympia* (figs. 26 and 27) to symbolize the “rotten Babylon” that was Paris and its corrupt art scene, where the “natural” was misconceived to reside solely in truth to the model’s physical appearance. “It’s fine to finick over the model after nature,” he observed to Theo, “but take care that you don’t breathe in the smell.”

Theo van Gogh was unconvinced by what Gauguin described as his “religious primitive style.” The dealer disliked the “reminiscences of the Japanese, the Egyptians, etc.,” in Gauguin’s new work, remarking to Vincent, “Myself, I prefer a Breton woman of the countryside to a Breton woman with the gestures of a Japanese woman.” The doubt of his staunch supporter might have been more worrisome had not Gauguin already decided to forsake Brittany and “a world too old” for a more authentically rejuvenative primitive experience in a faraway land. “The savage,” he informed Vincent, “will return to the savage state.”

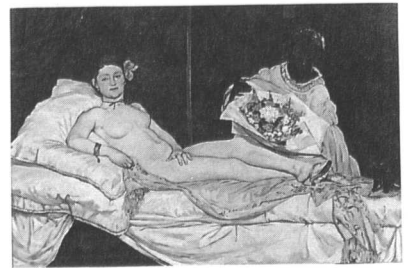
Predictably, Gauguin’s plans for this physical and spiritual escape from the strictures of European culture were structured by colonialist ideology, by what he had absorbed at the Universal Exhibition. All of the destinations he would consider over the next few years — first Tonkin, then Madagascar, and finally Tahiti — would be French territories. Moreover, while his ultimate choice of Tahiti was guided by its greater remoteness from the “civilized” world, the latter’s structures were always central to his plans. He expected some form of official sponsorship from the French ministries. And when he imagined at last realizing the ambition shared with Vincent, it was in terms of establishing “the studio of the Tropics . . . [in a] native hut like those . . . seen at the Universal Exhibition.” Likewise, his dream — to emerge “the Saint John the Baptist of the painting of the future, strengthened there by a more natural, more primitive, less rotten [way of] life” — was indebted to the promotion of colonialism as a means of revitalizing the nation’s spirit and economy. Gauguin saw himself as a pioneer.

heading out to make his fortune cultivating new territories. In fact, he described his art as a “seed” that he hoped he could “cultivate . . . in a primitive and savage state;” and while he claimed to be doing this for himself, he always intended to export his work back to France.

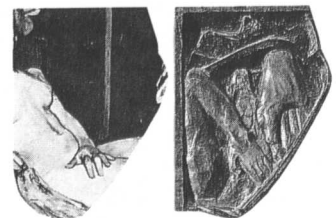
In short, Gauguin’s idealization of Tahiti was born both of earlier legends of the island as an earthly paradise where all needs could be effortlessly fulfilled and of current colonialist depictions of faraway French possessions as untapped “resources” offering economic and psychic “renewal.” He grew his hair long, like Buffalo Bill’s, and practiced with bow and arrow on the beaches of Le Pouldu as if to ready himself for the journey that a painter friend characterized as a return to “the childhood of civilizations, . . . to the unknown, to dreams and illusions.” This statement’s implications are echoed in a gouache wherein Gauguin depicted an exotic paradise at the moment before the Fall. That he modeled the face of his Eve on a photograph of his mother underscores the regressive dimension of his fantasy; that her pose and the vegetation surrounding her were inspired by a photograph of the Borobudur frieze indicate the degrees to which he hoped to find the authentic primitive that he could only project upon Brittany. He wished, as he stated in a published interview, to “be rid of the influence of civilization . . . to immerse myself in virgin nature, see no one but savages, live their life, with no other thought in mind but to render, the way a child would, the concepts formed in my brain and to do this with the aid of nothing but the primitive means of art. . .”



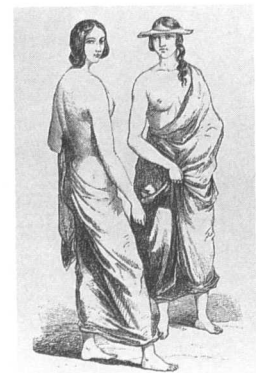
25. Paul Gauguin, *Be in Love and You Will be Happy*, 1889. Painted linden wood. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



26. Edouard Manet (French, 1832-1883). *Olympia*, 1863. Oil on canvas. Musée d’Orsay, Paris.



27. Details of figs. 25 and 26.

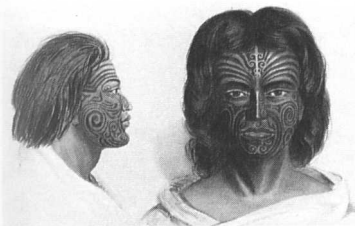


28. Anonymous, *Young Girls from Bora-Bora*. Wood engraving. From Eugène Delessert, *Voyages dans les deux océans* (Paris, 1849) Gauguin owned this book, referring to it in his 1903 manuscript “Avant et après.”

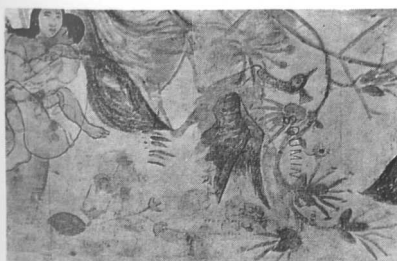
TAHITI 1891 - 1893



29. N. Maurin after J. Arago, *Queen of the Caroline Islands (Reine des Carolines)*.
Lithograph. From J. Arago, *Voyage autour du monde* (Paris, 1839), Vol. II, p. 327.



30. J.W. Giles after G.F. Angas, *The Aboriginal Inhabitants: Typical Portraits* (detail).
Lithograph. Plate 49, from George French Angas, *New Zealanders Illustrated* (London, 1846).



31a & b. Paul Gauguin, *"Soumin."* Gouache, pen and ink on bark cloth (*tapa*).
Private collection.

Shown both in its original condition, folded and stitched, in which it served as a folder (reconstruction) and in its present condition, with the stitching removed and unfolded.

In March 1893, Gauguin requested and received from the Minister of Public Education and Fine Arts a government-sponsored assignment, a "mission to Tahiti to study and ultimately paint this country's costumes and landscape." Using the discounted government ticket he received, Gauguin set sail in April from Marseilles. He carried with him an official letter of introduction and the collection of photographs, prints and drawings he referred to as his "small circle of comrades." He was, as we have seen, armed as well with a set of expectations shaped by imperialist fantasies of revitalization such as Pierre Loti's recent best seller *Le Mariage de Loti*, the would-be autobiographical account of the adventures of a French naval officer stationed in Tahiti who briefly accesses the "primitive" Other through an affair with a native girl.

That Gauguin arrived in Papeete just at the moment Tahiti's last native ruler, King Pomare V, died, symbolized the problem that he faced on reaching his destination: his arrival was belated. Although aspects of the king's funeral revealed a potent native culture, the corrupting effects of colonization were everywhere evident. "Tahiti is becoming completely French," Gauguin wrote his wife. "Little by little, all the ancient ways of doing things will disappear. Our missionaries have already imported much hypocrisy and they are sweeping away part of the poetry." But despite the presence of what he had hoped to flee, there was much that was new and exotic. And Gauguin set to work.

He began as he always did in such circumstances. "In each locale," he would later write, "I need a period of incubation, to learn each time the particular character of the plants, the trees — of the whole landscape" and of its native inhabitants. As before, drawing was the critical instrument of "getting the engine started in a new country . . . [of getting] used to the personality of each thing and each individual." He made studies of the local vegetation and the population at work. But a greater challenge to his comprehension was the native psyche, especially that of the women. Their ability to remain immobile and totally self-absorbed for hours on end fascinated him, and his many sketches and more finished drawings represent his attempt to penetrate their mystery.

What distinguished this undertaking from Gauguin's earlier confrontations with Otherness was the self-consciousness of his artistic "mission." Typical was his report, shortly after his arrival, to one friend: "I haven't yet done a *painting* — but a pile of research that will bear fruit, many documents that will serve me for a long time, I hope, in France." Several months later he informed another: "I am working harder and harder, but so far only on studies or, rather, documents, which are building up. If they are not useful to me later, they'll be so to others." Gauguin's repeated characterization of his Tahitian drawings as precious research "documents," as a kind of visual field work that constitutes the necessary preliminary to the later, off-site task of creating the synthetic statement that is the "painting," reveals the same scientific bias reflected in his application for government sponsorship. His stated goal — to create a series of pictures in

which he “fixes the country’s character and its light” — echoes the language of the “scientific missions,” the exploratory fact-finding expeditions then touted as the intellectual by-products of colonialist expansion. As a sailor, Gauguin had indirectly been part of such ventures; now as an artist he was on a mission of his own.

Gauguin owned illustrated travel books in which, as he would note scornfully, “all the faces [of the natives of India, China, the Philippines, Tahiti, etc.] . . . look like Minerva or Pallas Athena” (see fig. 28). He aimed to change the tradition of representing the mythic beauty of Tahitian women by projecting on them Western ideals and fantasies (see fig. 29). This he achieved brilliantly. Gauguin the ethnographer in his self-described quest of the “country’s female type” is perhaps most evident in the impressive black-chalk studies of natives that follow a tradition of ethnographic illustration in presenting the subject both full face and in profile (see fig. 30). But his goal is expressed in the way he juxtaposed two studies of a subject with a Marquesan earplug asleep and awake (see cat. no. 9). For despite Gauguin’s attentiveness to the humanity of his subjects, he also revealed a tendency to regard them as cultural artifacts, to study them as he did museum exhibits. Indeed he analyzed their features much like he did the Assyrian and Egyptian sculptures in the Louvre (see figs. 13a - 14b), sometimes emphasizing the affinities by projecting onto them the hieratic postures or masklike faces (see cat. no. 11) of ancient art.

Gauguin conceded that a similar blend of empathy and scientific detachment characterized his personal relationships. Soon after arriving, he formed a relationship with a local woman, the loquacious Titi, which he broke off because, as he would explain, “This half-white girl, glossy from contact with all these Europeans, would not fulfill the goal I had set myself.” Gauguin’s subsequent companion, teen-aged Tehamana, did: Of Polynesian origins, less experienced, and of a decidedly “impenetrable” character, she offered Gauguin the mysterious experience he sought in life and art (fig. 43).

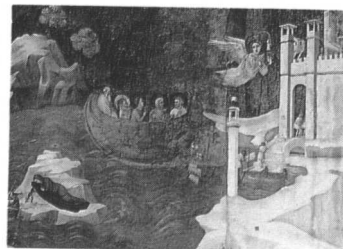
Gauguin kept his precious “documents” in folders he made of stitched barkcloth (*tapa*), decorated, and variously titled *Documents Tahiti, 1891, 1892, 1893*, “*Soumin*” [*sous-main*, or behind the scenes], and *Chez les Maoris: Sauvageries* (see figs. 31a & b, and cat no. 10). Filling these gave him the confidence that he had begun “to grasp the Oceanic character,” and he embarked on making the paintings that were his ultimate goal. Occasionally, he used the *documents* to prepare larger, more ambitious figure studies that were, in turn, incorporated into his paintings. More often, the paintings reveal that Gauguin used his “documents” as a formal repertory of figures, poses and gestures that he could call upon in elaborating his painted compositions. Often these are quite simple: the artist re-presents the figures in oil, now creating a context for them. Here, with the exception of the brightly colored *pareos* and high-necked missionary or Mother Hubbard dresses, signs of the colonialist contamination are absent. Like contemporary imagemakers working for the illustrated press who removed disturbing signs of the European presence from their sources (see figs. 32 & 33), Gauguin sets his Tahitians in idyllic, brilliantly colored landscapes.



32. Paul Emile Miot, *Woman with Tattooed Legs from the Madeleine Islands, the Marquesas, Photographed on Board the Astrée*, 1869/70. Photograph. Musée de l’homme, Paris.



33. A. Rixens and C. Laplanche after Paul Emile Miot, *Indigenous Woman from Taio-Hae*. Wood engraving. From *Le Tour du monde* 1 (1875), p. 245.

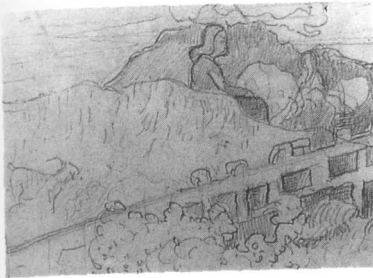


34. Giotto di Bondone (Italian, 1266-1337) *The Arrival of Saint Mary Magdalen at Marseilles*, 1309. Fresco. The Pontano Chapel, Lower Church of San Francesco, Assisi.

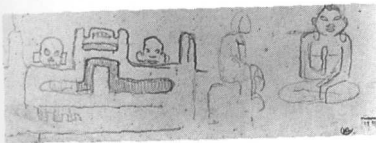
Gauguin pasted a photographic reproduction of this work onto page 236 of his manuscript “*Diverse choses*” (1896-97).



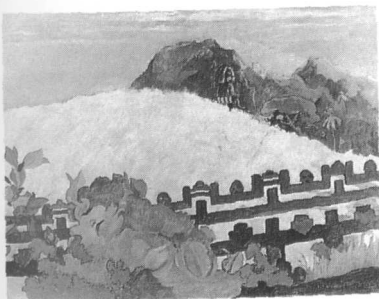
35. Marquesan earplug. Private collection.



36. Paul Gauguin, *Parahi te Marae (There is the Temple)*, 1892. Graphite. Private collection. Possibly the first idea for the painting, *Parahe te Marae (There is the Temple)*. Here the design of the fence has not yet been informed by the Marquesan earplug.



37. Paul Gauguin. Sheet with various designs related to "*Parahi te Marae (There is the Temple)*": a Marquesan earplug and two statues of deities, one in the pose of a Buddha, 1892. Graphite. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



38. Paul Gauguin, *Parahi te Marae (There is the Temple)*, 1892. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Possibly this scene finds its origin in images reproduced in illustrated periodicals, notably the site of the half buried, giant statues at Rano Raraku on Easter Island, popularized by the published drawings of Julian Viaud, alias Pierre Loti, the bestselling author.

But although much of the Tahitian landscape in fact remained untouched, Gauguin found that providing his figures with a vibrant cultural context was a challenging task. He considered resettling in the remote Marquesas in the hope of finding a culture "less spoiled by European civilization." For he now recognized that in Tahiti there remained almost nothing of the original, indigenous Maori culture he had dreamed of inhabiting and incorporating into his art. And if the present offered nothing, even the "traces of this distant, mysterious past" were few. Those he discovered, like the earplug, became seeds for the invention of grander signs of this civilization in paintings such as *The End of the Royal Line* (cat. no. 9, fig. 39), whose subject is its demise. As earlier in Brittany, Gauguin introduced the vital traces of other deceased cultures into this void, drawing on the resources of the "comrades" he had brought with him. In addition to the figures from the Borobudur frieze, Gauguin's images of Tahiti are inhabited by figures descended from such diverse backgrounds as the Parthenon frieze and Giotto's Assisi frescoes (see figs. 34 & 65).

Despite these obstacles, Gauguin was pleased with what he had accomplished by combining observation with invention and the study of Polynesian history, which he learned from his copy of Jacques-Antoine Moerenhout's 1837 two-volume work *Voyages aux îles du grand océan*. "I can guarantee that what I am doing here has not yet been done by anyone else, and that it is not known in France." So he informed Mette in the summer of 1892, adding his belief that "this newness will tip the balance in my favor" back home. With these hopes of having made his fortune, he set sail for France in July 1893.

THE RETURN TO FRANCE

1893 - 1895

Late in August 1893, Gauguin arrived back in France penniless. But soon thereafter, his fortune changed. Through the death of an uncle, he received a modest inheritance that permitted him to plan for his Parisian success. To this end, he undertook preparations for an exhibition of his Tahitian paintings, an accounting of his "mission" to be held at Durand-Ruel's gallery in November. In October, he began the first draft of what he described as a "book on Tahiti ... which will prove very helpful in making my painting understood." A report of his spiritual and artistic rejuvenation through contact with the primitive *Other*, its nature and culture embodied in Tehamana, Gauguin's "book" describes a foray outside the boundaries of Western civilization, an exotic adventure that, while cut short by the call of duties back home, leaves the protagonist more in touch with his primitive self, at once younger and wiser. Structurally indebted to Loti, it might have been called *Le Mariage de Gauguin*. Gauguin's title, *Noa Noa*, Tahitian for "perfume," suggests his conception of it as a functional antidote to the "stink" of a decadent Western civilization.

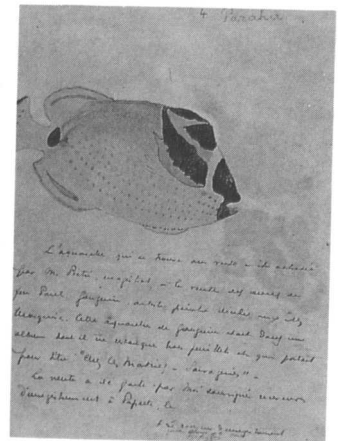
Gauguin had anticipated that his Tahitian work would function as a kind of new product within the Paris art world. But his hopes for the kind of dazzling success that Loti's novel had enjoyed were disappointed. His exhibition, held in November, was a financial failure. While it attracted considerable critical attention, much of it was divided. Detractors, such as the powerful critic Camille Mauclair and Gauguin's old mentor Pissarro, branded the work exploitive "colonial art"; advocates such as Roger Marx commended Gauguin as an insightful "ethnographer eminently capable of penetrating the enigma of the faces [of the Tahitians]...and extracting a grave beauty." Gauguin himself most appreciated the review by Paul Delaroche who described him as the "painter of primitive natures" and of "an Edenic and free life," while removing him from the politics of representation: "I care little whether or not there is exact reproduction in the name of exotic reality. Gauguin used this unprecedented framework to localize his dream, and what setting could be more favorable than one yet unpolluted by our civilized lies . . . Better than any other until now, Gauguin seems to have understood the role of the evocative setting."

Gauguin now applied this understanding to his life in Paris. He rented a studio which he painted a brilliant chrome yellow; this he decorated with his unsold Tahitian paintings in frames, initially white, he now painted them the same yellow as the walls. In addition, he put up his drawings as well as Tahitian and other exotic artifacts, including large fabrics and boldly patterned *tapa*. On this stage evoking Tahiti, Gauguin presented himself as the exotic bohemian, in both his choice of dress and of a companion, a thirteen-year-old substitute for Tehamana, a native of Ceylon nicknamed Annah *la Javanaise* and her pet monkey. Here Gauguin hosted gatherings attended by painters, writers and musicians and occasionally recited from his draft of *Noa Noa* (see figs. 48-51).



39. Paul Gauguin, *Arii Mata Moe (The End of the Royal Line)*, 1892. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

The severed head recalls the preserved tattooed heads (*moko mokai*) of the New Zealand Maori. Other recognizable sources include the Peruvian mummy (fig. 15) and similar designs derived from Marquesan sculptures and carved artifacts.



40a & b. Paul Gauguin, *Te Nave Nave Fenua* (recto), *Fish* (verso). Brush and gouache on wove paper, 1892/93. Musée de Grenoble.



41. Paul Gauguin, *Tahitian Women (On the Beach)* (detail), 1891. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



42. Paul Gauguin, *Et l'Or de leur corps (And the Gold of their Skin)* (detail), 1901. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



43. Paul Gauguin, *Merahi Metua No Tehamana (Tehamana Has Many Ancestors)*, 1893. Oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago.

The sitter holds a fan made of plaited leaves. In addition to the Easter Island glyphs, the frieze behind her depicts the goddess Hina and an entourage of evil spirits or tupapaus.

Conceived from the first to create the appropriate context for the appreciation of his art, the planned publication took on greater importance in the immediate aftermath of his exhibition. Gauguin confided his text to his friend, the poet Charles Morice, who was to collaborate on the project, refining the artist's prose while adding some of his own poetry. Now, early in 1894, the artist undertook a project to illustrate the planned publication. This included making drawings based on his Tahitian paintings and sculpture (see cat. no. 14) that could be reproduced in the pages of his book using current photomechanical technology (see fig. 52). But its centerpiece was the suite of ten woodcuts that Gauguin conceived to form an album which, though physically independent, would function as the book's visual complement (see cat. nos. 15-25).

Gauguin's *Noa Noa* suite is without precedent in the history of graphic art. His choice of medium was exceptional. For while the art of wood engraving was widely employed for the illustrated press, the coarser technique of woodcut had long been out of fashion, associated as it was with German "primitives" such as Dürer and Cranach. Combining both techniques, Gauguin's prints — like his earlier wooden sculptures — display refinement while capitalizing on the rough, "primitive" qualities of the woodcut medium and employing tools as diverse as knife, gouge, chisel, needle and sandpaper. In printing his woodblocks, Gauguin increased the expressive valence of the medium by various means: staining the paper support with color prior to printing; applying inks to the block inconsistently; exerting uneven pressure during printing. The resulting impressions appear to move in and out of focus; the images are blurry, indeterminate and mysterious (see cat. no. 23). While the edition of about thirty impressions that Gauguin had printed by artist-engraver Louis Roy are both more consistent and legible (see cat. no. 17), comparison with the highly readable impressions of the prints later pulled from the existing blocks by the artist's son Pola Gauguin (see cat. nos. 15, 16, 18-22, 24 and 25) reveal Roy's conscious attempt to preserve Gauguin's aesthetic of mystery.

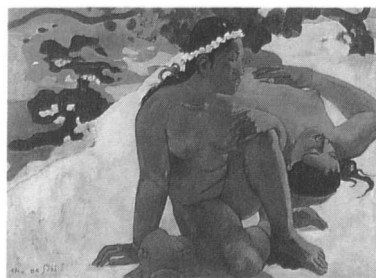
In its form, content and iconographic complexity, the *Noa Noa* series is similarly without precedent in Gauguin's oeuvre. His manuscript describes the challenge modern-day Tahiti presented the artist: "to rediscover the ancient hearth, to revive the fire in the midst of all these ashes. And, for that, quite alone, without any support." In the paintings he did there, the artist had occasionally attempted to evoke not only the mystery of contemporary Tahitians but also that of their vanished culture. Now, in images that recombined motifs from earlier works, Gauguin created a rich and highly inventive mythic vision that can be read as unfolding in narrative sequence. It opens with a title or cover sheet representing the food-gathering that is part of contemporary Tahitian life (see cat. no. 15); this is followed by a scene in which Gauguin the narrator begins his tale, in the presence of an evil spirit and before a recumbent Giottesque figure, perhaps symbolic of Tahiti's sleeping past (see cat. no. 16). The "narrative" starts with the gods *Hina* and *Te Fatou*, the alpha and omega of Gauguin's Tahitian legend (see cat. no. 17) and proceeds to the creation of the universe (see cat. no. 18). Following a period of contentment and grateful reverence of the gods (see cat. no. 19), evil enters the "fragrant isle" and tempts the Tahitian Eve (see cat. no. 21). Then "the devil

(see cat. no. 22): lovemaking, which briefly brings transcendent union (see cat. no. 23), yields to jealousy that turns its back on life (see cat. no. 24). This is the fallen world, where the “spirit of the dead” watches and the poses of birth, sleep and death are one (see cat. no. 25).

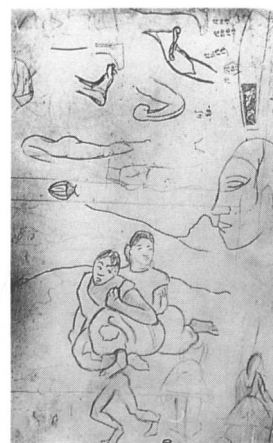
To playwright August Strindberg, Gauguin claimed to have sketched “another world,” one unknown to scientists, inhabited by an “ancient Eve” and represented by means of “savage drawing...naked and primordial” like the languages of Oceania. This is the spirit Gauguin sought to embody in the stoneware sculpture he made while in Paris and called *Oviri* (see fig. 53), which means “wild” or “savage” in Tahitian. In creating it, Gauguin enacted his desire to fuse the “primitive” and “civilized” by marrying two disparate sources — Delacroix’s representation of the Soâne River in the Salon du Roi at the Palais du Corps législatif (see fig. 54) and the Assyrian figure of Gilgamesh in the Louvre (see fig. 55).

A similar device to evoke a distant past informs the monotype technique Gauguin pioneered at the same moment (see cat. no. 27). Realized by offsetting watercolor designs made on paper or glass, these works became, in the process of their creation, a generation removed from the artist’s hand. Partial products of chance, they are characterized by a pale, slightly blurred quality that makes them seem the representation less of present experience than of a distant memory on the verge of fading away. They appear to embody Gauguin’s nostalgia for an unretrievable past.

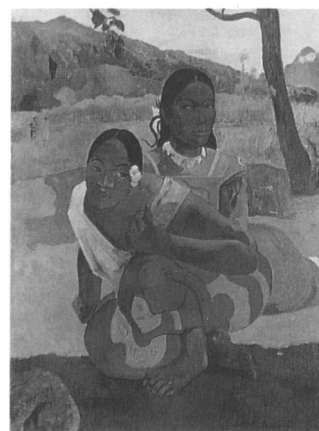
Certainly life in the present was not what Gauguin had dreamed of. Increasingly bitter at his lack of success and plagued by financial worries, he had become nostalgic for “the simple life of Oceania.” By July 1894, he had decided, “As soon as possible, I’ll go bury my talent among the savages and no one will hear of me again. . . . The Europeans are unremittingly hostile to me; those good savages will understand me.” At the beginning of July 1895, Gauguin again set sail for Tahiti. He was never to return.



44. Paul Gauguin, *Aha Oe Feii (What! Are You Jealous?)*, 1892. Oil on canvas. Pushkin Museum, Moscow.



45. Photograph taken of cat. no. 12 in its original condition, prior to trimming and erasures. Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.



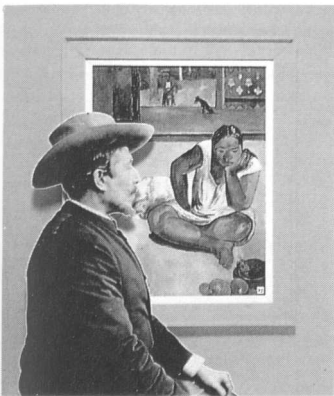
46. Paul Gauguin, *Nafea Faai Poipo (When Will you Marry?)* 1892. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

AUCKLAND, TAHITI AND THE MARQUESAS

1895 - 1903



47. Paul Gauguin, *Faaturuma (Reverie)* 1891. Oil on canvas. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City.



48. Reconstruction based on an 1894 photograph. Paul Gauguin in his studio in rue Vercingétorix, Paris, in front of his painting *Te Faaturuma*, 1891.



49. Reconstruction based on an 1894 photograph. Annah la Javanaise and friends in Gauguin's studio in rue Vercingétorix, Paris, in front of Gauguin's paintings (tl) *Matamua*, 1892, (tr) *Arearea*, 1892, (bl) *Arii Mata Moe*, 1892, and (br) *Te Fare Maorie*, 1891.

It was en route to Tahiti that Gauguin encountered more physical traces of the indigeneous Polynesian culture that had been so elusive during his first stay there. The stop-over in Auckland afforded him the opportunity to study and make sketches after the important collections of *Maori* art in the newly opened wing of the Auckland Museum. Among the objects that drew his attention were *tikis*, the carved decorations incorporated in meeting and storehouses, as well as the wooden treasure boxes so similar in spirit to that which the artist had himself fashioned a decade earlier (see figs. 1a-d). In the coming year, Gauguin would echo these carved decorations in works invoking the Polynesian past (see figs. 68-76).

By contrast, Gauguin arrived back in Tahiti to find it even more Europeanized than he had remembered. "Papeete, the capital of this Eden, Tahiti," he bitterly observed, "is now lit with electricity. A merry-go-round spoils the great lawn in front of the old King's garden." At the same time, attempts of the natives on neighboring islands to defy colonial rule and its imposition of "civilization" were being repressed with a great show of military force. Gauguin described himself as "sickened." He announced his plan to escape European contamination by moving to the Marquesas, the remote group of islands sighted in 1595 by Alvaro de Medaña and situated some 750 miles to the northeast of Tahiti.

But six years were to pass before Gauguin left Tahiti. During that time, he was plagued by ill health and financial problems. While this affected his production, he continued making art. The need to reach an understanding of his surroundings had by now been largely satisfied, and Gauguin apparently produced few sketches and drawings like those that characterized his first sojourn. But the "documents" he had produced earlier remained "very useful" as was the collection of prints and photographic reproductions that were still constant "companions." Gauguin cultivated them much as he did his garden in Punaaiua, where he planted seeds of European flower varieties sent by friends among Tahitian plants to create his own "authentic Eden." Similarly in his art, he now concentrated on creating an edenic vision by cross pollinating sources — ancient and modern; Asian, Western and Polynesian — fertilized by his Tahitian experience, his earlier documents and paintings.

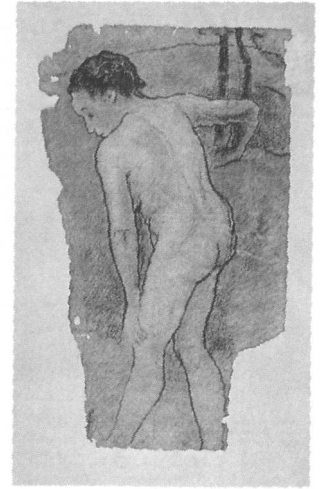
Born of his various artistic passions, Gauguin's dream of a Tahiti that never was recurs in all the media in which he worked. As always, he was particularly sensitive to the inherent expressive resources of each. Hence, his return, around 1898, to woodcut, the medium he prized as "going back to the primitive times of printmaking" and considered the antithesis of the "loathsome" modern photomechanical techniques. In his "little series" of fourteen prints, some evidently intended to function together as friezes, Gauguin recognized what he called technical "imperfections"; but he seems to have also acknowledged the

expressive role these played, enhancing the interest of these prints as “Art.” He was convinced the “worth” of his woodcuts would eventually be recognized.

A similar desire to lend his drawings an evocative aura led him to “research” a new drawing medium. The method he devised was to apply a coating of ink to one sheet of paper, place a second over it and draw with pencil or crayon on the top sheet. The pressure exerted by the drawing implement transferred the ink from the first sheet of paper onto the verso of the sheet on which he drew. Representing the drawn composition in reverse, this transfer rather than the initial drawing became the finished work of art. Gauguin clearly enjoyed the process, which he characterized as “of childlike simplicity,” for the way it both courted chance and transformed the quality of the drawn line. Rough-looking, grainy and a dark greenish brown, the transfer drawings assume the weathered look of survivors from another age. Indeed they resemble nothing so much as ancient glyphs, carved in rock whose surface has been patinated by time and lichen, like the few extant Tahitian ruins that Gauguin had actually seen.

While evoking the past, Gauguin was constantly thinking of the future. He entertained the idea of having a show of his recent paintings, drawings and prints to coincide with the upcoming 1900 Paris Universal Exhibition. Even his desire to flee from the European presence in Tahiti, back across time as it were, to the Marquesas, was characterized by the same naive optimism and colonialist dreams of striking it rich that had first brought him to Tahiti: he hoped to enjoy an easier way of life, to find creative “rejuvenation,” to “discover . . . totally new and more savage” subject matter with which to surprise a Parisian audience and by contrast to make his Tahitian work seem “comprehensible and charming.”

In September 1901, Gauguin at last set sail for the Marquesas. There he settled on the island of Hiva Oa, in Atuona, where he purchased land and, with the help of neighbors, built a house. On the outside, he decorated the entrance with an elaborate frieze carved in wood, possibly inspired by the Maori meeting and storehouses he had recorded in the Auckland Museum. Inside, he adorned the walls with his recent woodcut friezes, as well as with reproductions of works by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Degas, Hans Holbein the Younger, and of Javanese sculpture (see fig. 77), these “old companions” serving, as before, as the backdrop for new experience. He named his “little Marquesan fortress” his “House of Pleasure” (*Maison du Jouir*). But this turned out to be something of a misnomer. The presence of a new teenaged companion did not defend against the fact that he was not at all well. He quarreled in earnest with the local French authorities. Discouraged, he wrote a friend in August 1902 that he was seriously considering leaving the islands to settle in Spain. In reply, he was told he must remain: to return would compromise the legendary status he was fast attaining. “In short,” he was counseled, “you enjoy the immunity of the departed great, you have passed into the history of art.” Gauguin listened and foreswore the castles in Spain. While his graphic work remained strong, his paintings now occasionally showed a falling off. In 1902, he painted a picture in which, for the first time, he admitted the European presence into his Tahitian



50. Paul Gauguin, *Woman Bathing*, 1886/87. Pastel on paper. The Art Institute of Chicago.

Residue of chrome-yellow pigment on the verso of the drawing suggests that Gauguin, on his return from Tahiti, glued it to the chrome-yellow walls of his Paris studio.



51. William Molard in Gauguin's studio on the rue Vercingétorix.

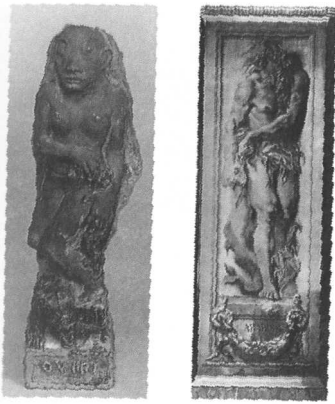
The desk behind which Molard sits is covered with a large piece of decorated bark cloth (tapa). The exotic, patterned fabric behind him features as a backdrop in various paintings by Gauguin.



52. Paul Gauguin, Title design or headpiece for *Noa Noa* with the initials CM (Charles Morice) and PCO (the artist), 1894. Pen and ink, brush and wash. Private collection.

world: in *Sister of Charity* (Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio), a nun directly confronts a group of Tahitians assembled from Gauguin's repertory of earlier works. It seemed the Tahiti of his dreams must inevitably succumb to the historic present.

On May 8, 1903, aged fifty-four, Gauguin died alone in his "House of Pleasure." The legend of his life was secured, celebrated unquestioningly for almost a century. More enduring are the fictions that are his work, an oeuvre of unquestionable beauty and seminal importance to the history of modern art.



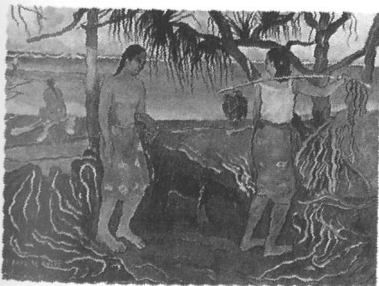
53. Paul Gauguin, *Oviri*, 1894. Partially glazed stoneware. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

54. Eugène Delacroix, (French, 1798-1863). *The Saône River (Araris)*, 1836. Grisaille. Salon du Roi, Palais du Corps législatif, Paris.

Gauguin owned reproductions of pendentives by Delacroix for the Deputies' Library in the same building and incorporated them into his paintings.

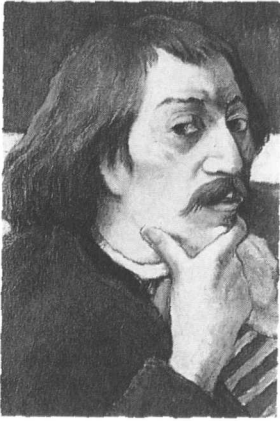


55. *Propitiatory Genius of a Hero (Gilgamesh)*, Late Assyrian period, (end of 8th century BC). Alabaster. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

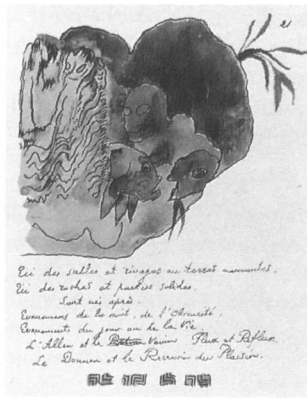


56. Paul Gauguin. *I Raro te Oviri (Under the Pandanus Trees)*, 1891. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas.

One of the artist's earliest painted recordings of aspects of daily life in Tahiti. A watercolour monotype based on the same painting serves as a frontispiece for the embellished version of Gauguin's *Noa Noa* manuscript in the Louvre museum collection.



57. Paul Gauguin. *Self-Portrait* (detail), 1890. Oil on canvas. The Detroit Institute of Arts.



62. Paul Gauguin, "Ancien Culte Mahorie," p.21. Pen and ink, brush and watercolor. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

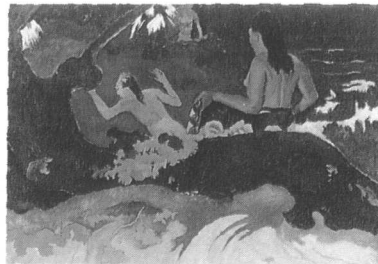


66. War club.

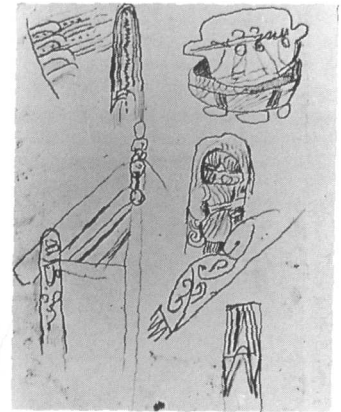
67. Photograph of cat. no. 29 in its former condition, showing the full extent of the design support prior to being cut down.



58. Giotto di Bondone (Italian, 1266-1337). *The Arrival of Saint Mary Magdalen at Marseilles* (detail), 1309. Fresco. The Pontano Chapel, Lower Church of San Francesco, Assisi.



63. Paul Gauguin. *Fatata Te Miti (By the Sea)*, 1892. Oil on canvas. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



68. Paul Gauguin, *Auckland Sketchbook* page 6, 1895. Graphite. Formerly collection of Madame Joly-Segalen. Photo: Richard Field.

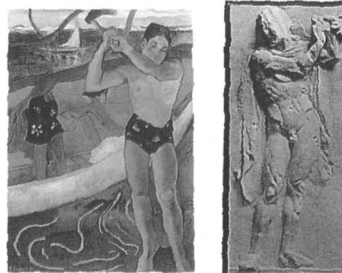
The objects represented on this sheet include: top left, a decorative detail (*whakarare*) of a carving such as a wooden hand club (*wahaika*, see fig 69); below, a detail of a carved meeting house (*whare-whakairo*) with a carved supporting slab (*amo*) and gable figure (*tekoteko*, see fig 70); to the right, a design of a patterned painted rafter (*heke*).



59. (left) Paul Gauguin, *Hina and Tefato*, 1892. Tamanu wood. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

60. (centre) Paul Gauguin, *Idol with a Pearl*, probably 1892. Polychromed wood. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

61. (right) Paul Gauguin, *Cylinder Decorated with the Figure of Hina*, probably 1892. Polychromed wood, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC.



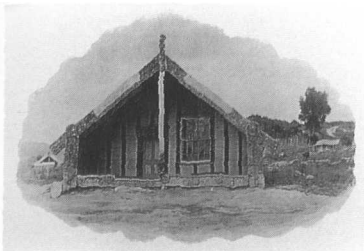
64. Paul Gauguin, *Man with an Ax*, 1891. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

65. Plate U from Charles Yriarte, *Les Frises du Parthenon par Phidias* (Paris, 1868).

The plates for this publication were produced by Gauguin's guardian, Gustave Arosa.

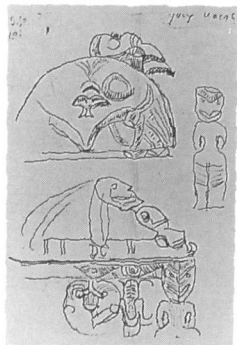


69. Carved Wooden Club. From A. Hamilton, *Maori Art* (Wellington, 1896-1901), pl. 33, fig. 4.

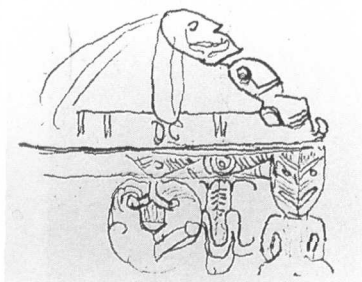


70. Meeting House at Ohinemutu, Lake Rotorua. From A. Hamilton, *Maori Art* (Wellington, 1896-1901), p.115.

Gauguin appears to have sketched another photograph of this house, Tama-Te-Kapua.



71a. Paul Gauguin, *Auckland Sketchbook* page 5, 1895. Graphite. Formerly the collection of Madame Joly-Segalen. Photo: Richard Field.



71b. Detail of 71a.



72. Carved Boxes. From A. Hamilton, *Maori Art* (Wellington, 1896-1901). pl. 63, fig. 2.

The handle on the lid of the large kumete (centre) informed the decoration of the cradle in Gauguin's painting *Te Rerioa (The Dream)* (see fig 73). The bowl and its supporting figures feature again in the container in Gauguin's *Still Life with Sunflowers and Mangoes* (see fig. 74).



73. Paul Gauguin, *Te Rerioa (The Dream)* (detail), 1897. Oil on canvas. Courtauld Institute Galleries, London.



74. Paul Gauguin, *Still Life with Sunflowers and Mangoes*, 1901. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

The "flower" with the eye in the background alludes to a charcoal drawing Gauguin once owned by his friend Odilon Redon.



75. Paul Gauguin. *The Great Buddha* (detail), 1897. Oil on canvas. The Pushkin Museum, Moscow.



76. Pukaki: Wooden Gateway Carving. From A. Hamilton, *Maori Art*, pl.20.



77. Photograph of Tohotana in Gauguin's studio in Hiva Oa, in Atuona.

In the background, on the wall of plaited leaves and hanging above the dresser can be seen a selection of Gauguin's "companions," from left to right, top to bottom: Puvis de Chavannes's painting *Hope*; Degas's pastel *Harlequin*; Isidore van Kinsbergen's photograph of a Javanese sculpture of Vishnu; and Holbein the Younger's painting *The Artist's Wife and her Two Children*.



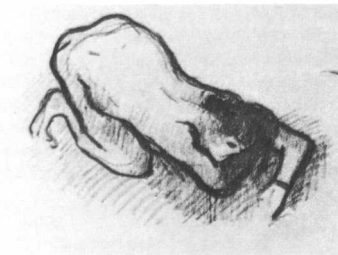
78. Isidore van Kinsbergen. *Unknown figure with four arms, seated (Wonosobo)*, Bagelen* (Vishnu), Central Java. Albumen print. From *Oudheden van Java...gephotografeerd door I. van Kinsbergen* (Batavia [1872]), pl. 154. Courtesy of the Institut Kern, Leiden.



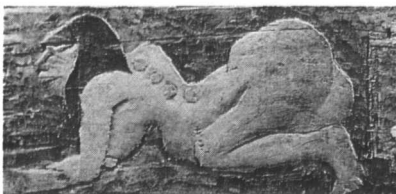
79. Isidore van Kinsbergen. *The Tathagat Meets an Ajiwaka Monk on the Benares Road* (detail). Albumen print. From *Oudheden van Java: De tempel ruïne Boro-Boedoer* (Batavia [1874]), pl. 57/58. Courtesy of the Instituut Kern, Leiden.



80. Rooftop of plaited coconut palm leaves.



81. Paul Gauguin. *Sketchbook page 6*, from the "Album Briant", with naked woman on her knees after Edgar Degas (detail), 1888. Black crayon. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



82. Paul Gauguin. *Te Fare Amu (The Dining Room)*, 1896/1901. Polychromed wood. Private collection.

CATALOGUE PLATES



1.



2.



3. (recto)



3. (verso)



Proserpine Martingot. Del. Gauguin.



*M. Paul Gauguin
Les drames de la mer. Bretagne.*



5.



7. (recto)



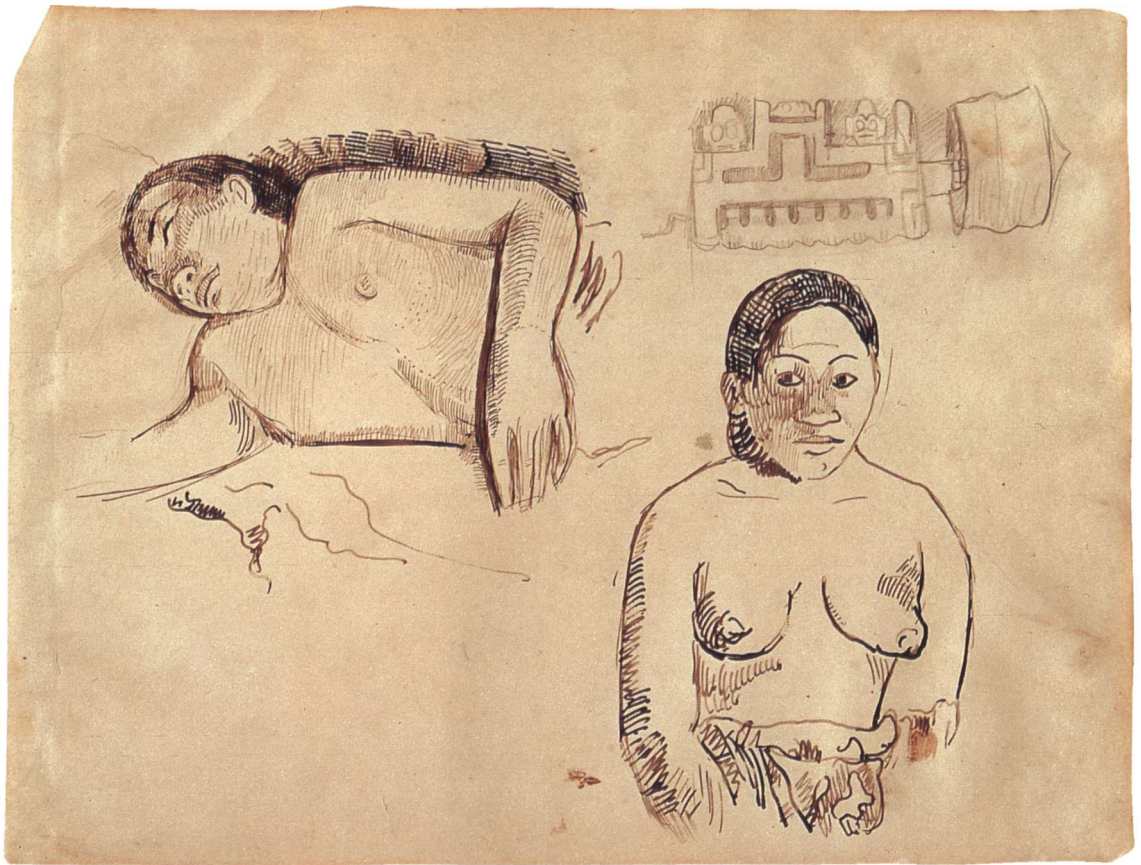
7. (verso)



8. (recto)



8. (verso)



9.



10.



11. (recto)



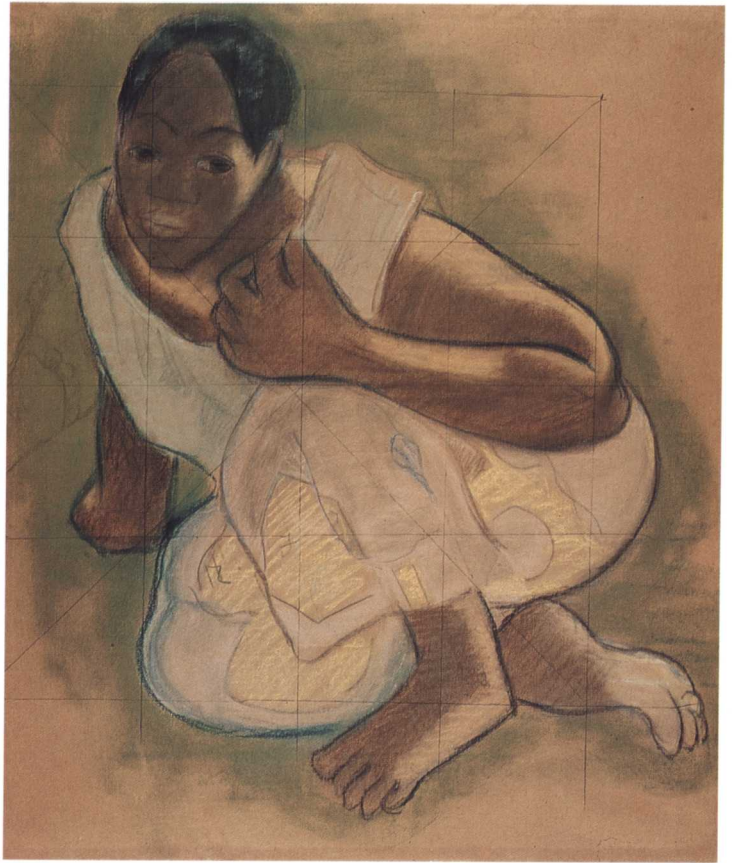
12. (recto)



11. (verso)



12. (verso)



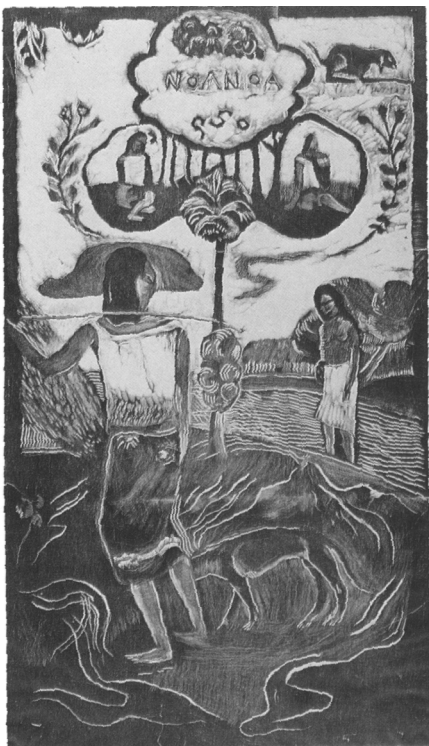
13. (recto)



13. (verso)



14.



15.



16.



17.



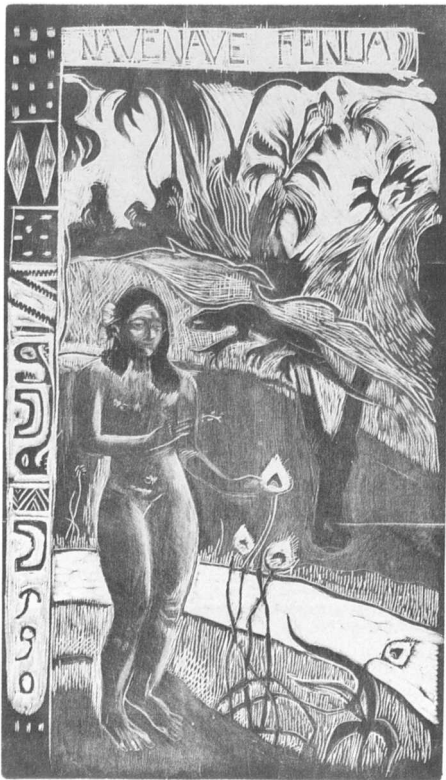
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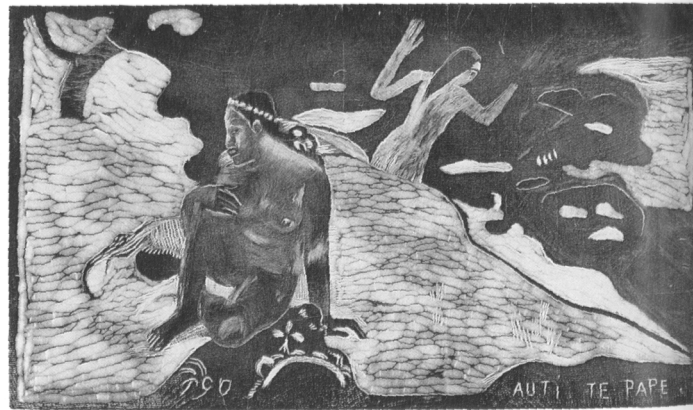
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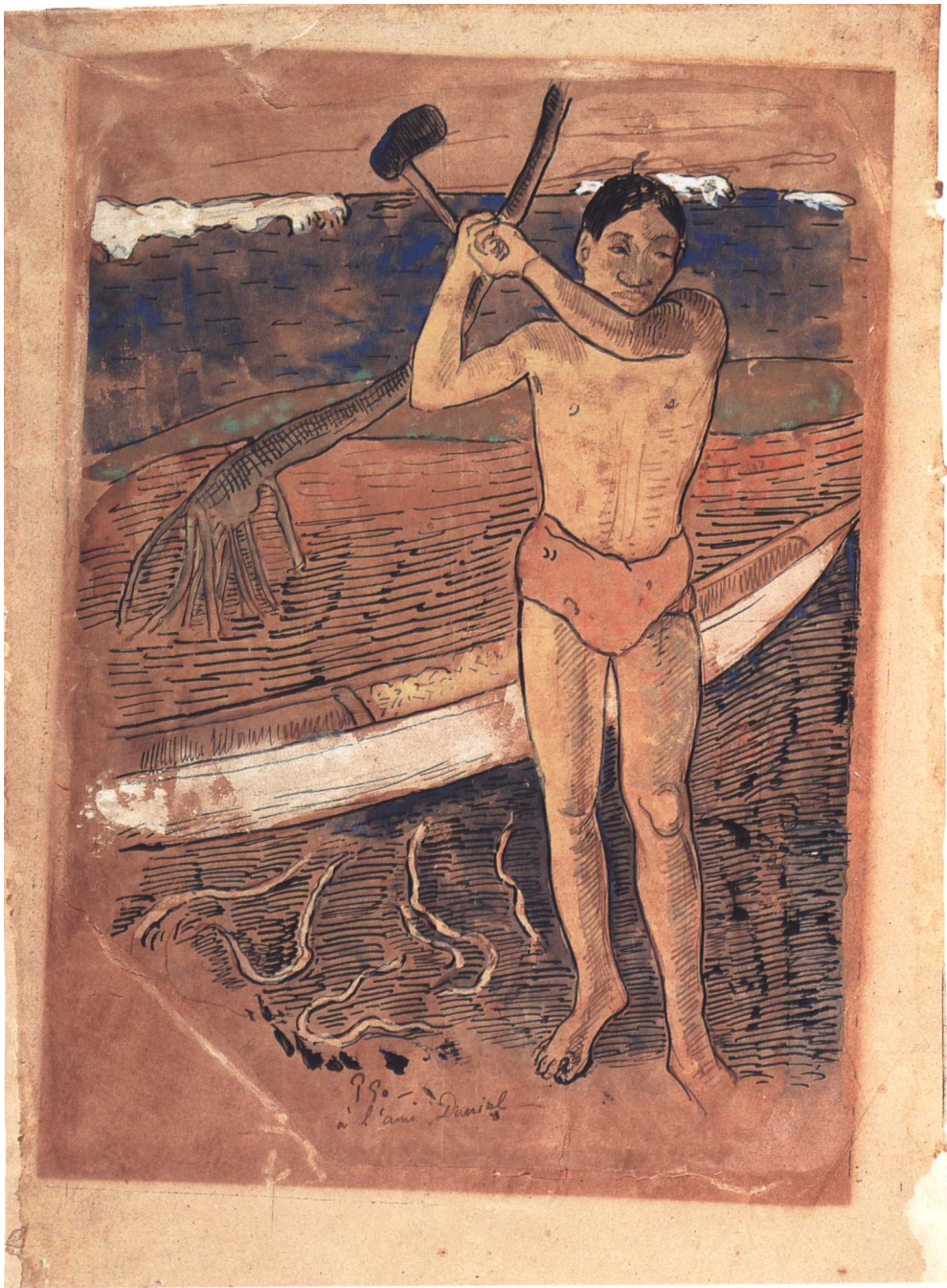
25.



Pr. 29.
Paul Gauguin

26.







31.



32.



30.



33.



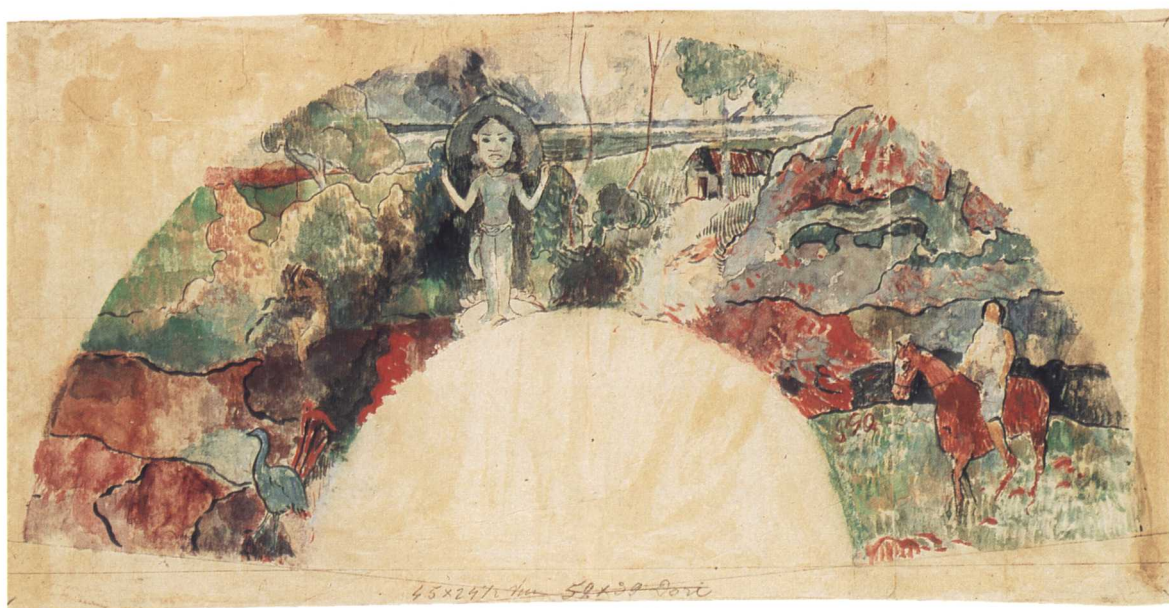
34. (recto)



34. (verso)



29.



35.

1

Jean René Gauguin, 1881

Brush and brown wash, with pen and brown ink, and red chalk on wove paper, 119 x 122 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The H. Karl and Nancy von Maltitz Endowment, 1990.63.

One of Gauguin's most engaging representations of his children, this drawing portrays his fourth child and third son, Jean René, who was born on 12 April 1881. During Gauguin's first stay in Tahiti, his wife Mette selected this drawing for inclusion in the "Free Exhibition of Modern Art [Frie Udstilling]," a group exhibition held in Copenhagen in March 1893. Gauguin was represented by fifty works in all media, including recent works shipped from Tahiti. The portrait of Jean René featured in the catalogue as no. 122.

2

Seated Breton Woman, 1886

Charcoal and pastel selectively worked with brush and water on laid paper; watermark: *Lalanne*. Dedicated and signed at upper right: *à M. Laval / Souvenir / P. G.* 328 x 483 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Mr and Mrs Carter H. Harrison Collection, 1933.910

Gauguin used more carefully executed studies such as this, along with the abbreviated notations he confided to his sketchbooks, as an image bank he drew upon when making his paintings, carvings and ceramics. The artist employed this particular figure for both a watercolor and gouache design for a fan and for a ceramic vase, each time integrating it into a group composition set in a landscape.

3

Page from a Martinique Sketchbook: Profile of Charles Laval, with sketches of figures, dog and a tree (recto); sketches of figures and foliage (verso), 1887

(Recto) black crayon and pen and brown ink; (verso) black crayon with brush and watercolor on mottled blue wove paper, altered to grey. 204 x 268 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Regenstein Collection, 1991.223

Part of a now dismantled sketchbook, this sheet reveals Gauguin's practice of occasionally embellishing his quick drawings with color notes in watercolor.

4

Martinique Pastorals, from the album of eleven zincographs known as *The Volpini Suite*, 1889.

Zincograph in black on yellow wove paper. 213 x 263 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The William McCallin McKee Memorial Collection, 1943.1025

This is one of two prints in the *Volpini Suite* that Gauguin based on his Martinique work. The composition relates directly to a wood relief.

5

Sea Dramas - Brittany, from the album of eleven zincographs known as *The Volpini Suite*, 1889

Zincograph in black on yellow wove paper, 169 x 117 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The William McCallin McKee Memorial Collection, 1943.1026

Seven prints in Gauguin's series of zincographs treat Breton themes. The unconventional format of this composition relates to the artist's current decorative projects. Similarly, ingredients such as the promontory, the seascape below, and Breton women praying derive from works in other media.

6

Page from a Tahitian Sketchbook featuring a *Pandanus* leaf; a seated Tahitian woman weaving *Pandanus* leaves; the same figure in profile; a *Vanilla plant*, 1891/93

Black crayon, graphite, brush and watercolor on wove paper, 313 x 200 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Mr and Mrs Morton E. Neumann, 1966.545

This sketchbook sheet reflects the "incubatory" period following the artist's arrival in Tahiti. In addition to revealing his interest in the vegetation that surrounded him, the drawing suggests an intention to "document" the local flora and their uses as might a botanist or scientific illustrator. Though abbreviated, his rendition of the *Pandanus* leaf, at top, includes its characteristic "thorns." Similarly, he noted that the woman at work weaving the *Pandanus* leaves sits on a woven mat quite possibly identical to that she is engaged in creating. In representing,

at bottom right, the vanilla plant (*Vanilla planifolia*) that was, and still is, commercially grown in Tahiti. Gauguin noted the plant's zig-zag stem, vining habit, and long, podlike seed capsules (the so-called *vanilla beans*).

7

Sketches of figures and animals from Tahiti (recto and verso), 1891/93.

Graphite, pen and ink, brush and watercolor on wove paper. 321 x 435 mm. Edward McCormick Blair, Chicago

Making sketches such as this was Gauguin's means of what he called "getting the engine started in a new country...[getting] used to the personality of each thing and each individual."

This sheet does not come from one of Gauguin's Tahitian sketchbooks. Rather, it seems to have been executed on letter or writing paper. The animal studies seen here reappear in some of Gauguin's Tahitian paintings. Particularly important for the artist's subsequent work is the figure of the crouching woman (recto). The pose fascinated Gauguin and recurs in many of his images. This study may represent its first occurrence in his oeuvre.

8

Seated Tahitian Woman (recto); Standing Tahitian Woman (verso), 1891/93

(Recto) reed pen and metal pen and ink selectively traced with graphite; (verso) reed pen and metal pen and ink on wove paper. Inscribed by the artist, recto, top center, in pen and ink: *tête plus gros*. 170 x 145 mm. Edward McCormick Blair, Chicago

Gauguin's tendency to see his Tahitian subjects in terms of the art that already interested him is suggested by the way he isolated lips and feet, much as he had done when studying the Egyptian statue of King Ramses II in the Louvre (see fig. 13b). Likewise, in the pose of the seated Tahitian woman, Gauguin echoed the central figure in Delacroix's *Algerian Women* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), the celebrated painting that grew out of that artist's earlier search for the exotic in North Africa.

Certainly, Gauguin found the pose of the seated figure singularly representative of the Tahitian character, incorporating it into other contemporary drawings and paintings. Moreover, it is one of the "documents" from the first Tahitian trip to which the artist subsequently had frequent recourse: the figure reappears in such later paintings as *NO TE AHA OE RIRI* (*Why Are You Angry*), 1896, and *The Sister of Charity*, 1902 (Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio); moreover, he made direct use of the drawing to create two of the traced transfer drawings of his final years.

9

Two Tahitian Women and a Marquesan Earplug, 1891/93

Reed pen and metal pen and brown ink and graphite on vellum, 240 x 318 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The David Adler Collection, 1950.1413

An arresting aspect of this drawing, when studied in the context of all those Gauguin made during his first Tahitian sojourn, is the presence of a Marquesan earplug (*putaiana*). Rendered in graphite with an accuracy worthy of an ethnographer, it is one of the relatively few cultural artifacts that Gauguin had the opportunity to study during his stay in Tahiti. In effect, it is not Tahitian but rather Marquesan in origin.

An adornment for women, earplugs were family heirlooms carved from the bone of an ancestor. Modest in size, they range from 3.5 to 4.5 cm in length. For Gauguin, however, this small artifact literally took on monumental significance for his invention of a lost Tahitian culture. On two occasions, Gauguin made use of its design in creating much larger elements for his imagined Tahiti: as a fence dividing the local countryside in one painting (see fig. 38) and as part of the wall decoration in a scene that represents the passing of the island's Royal line (see figs 35 – 37, 39).

10

Chez Les Maories - Sauvageries – PGO 91/92/93 (At Home with the Maori – Savage Things PGO 91/92/93).

Decorated cover. Brush and gouache on sewn bark cloth (*tapa*), 330 x 530 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Estate of Carl O. Schniewind.

Which of Gauguin's Tahitian drawings or "documents" this album originally contained is unknown. As with so many of artist's sketchbooks, this was broken up, its pages dispersed, leaving no trace of their original context as they found their way into public and private collections. An exception is the sheet reproduced in fig. 40 a & b, and now in the collection of the Musée de Grenoble. On the verso, under the drawing of a fish, there is early written testimony that this particular sheet originally came from the album whose cover is shown here.

11

Heads of Tahitian Women, Frontal and Profile Views (recto); Portrait of Tehamana (verso), 1891/93

Charcoal selectively stumped and worked with brush and water, fixed, on wove paper, 414 x 326 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of David Adler and His Friends, 1956.1215

The drawing on the recto served Gauguin in paintings executed during both his first and second Tahitian sojourns. The figure in profile reappears, facing right, in *Tahitian Women (On the Beach)* (1891) (see fig. 41) and the closely related *Parau Api (What News?)*, (1892; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden). In the latter, particularly, it is clear that the second figure derives from that at right in the drawing, who is seen frontally. This figure recurs, even more explicitly translated, in a painting Gauguin made in 1901 during his second Tahitian stay, *And the Gold of their Bodies* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) (see fig. 42).

Gauguin's drawing of his teen-aged companion Tehamana served as the basis for his famous painting of 1893 *Merahi Metua No Tehemana (Tehemana has many ancestors)* (see fig. 43). In this portrait of a young native woman and her ancestry, Gauguin signaled the cultural disruption that

colonialism had introduced. Tehamana is dressed not as were her ancestors, but rather in the high-necked Mother Hubbard dress imposed on the population for propriety's sake by the missionaries. To represent the signs of her ancestral past when in fact most traces of it had disappeared, Gauguin had to turn to the *rongo-rongo* tablets, so called "talking boards," that had been found on Easter Island: to suggest her background, he transcribed two rows of these indecipherable glyphs, the only form of writing to survive from ancient Polynesian culture. "Talking boards" had been displayed in the 1889 Paris Universal Exhibition.

12

Sketches of figures, studies of hands and feet related to Aha Oe Feii (What! Are you Jealous?) [1892] (recto), Fragments of bodies, a decorative design and two crouching Tahitian women in a landscape related to Nafea Faaipoipo (When Will You Marry?) [1892] (verso), 1892

(Recto) graphite; (verso) graphite, pen and ink on wove paper. 235 x 201 mm. Edward McCormick Blair, Chicago

These studies of hands and feet reveal Gauguin's fascination with certain gestures and attitudes that oftentimes recur in his paintings. In this case, they can be related directly to his painting of 1892, *Aha Oe Feii (What! Are You Jealous?)* (see fig. 44).

Likewise, the two women that feature on the verso were used by Gauguin as the focus of another painting of 1892, *Nafea Faaipoipo (When Will You Marry?)* (see fig. 46). That this appears to be a preparatory study for the picture is somewhat deceiving. Originally, the page contained other sketches (see fig. 45), including figures of dancers apparently after Degas. At some point in the drawing's history, however, these other sketches were removed: those at top literally trimmed off, others nearer the two seated figures erased. Apparently, the intent was to make the sheet seem more important by emphasizing its relationship to a famous painting. Thus edited, it presents a misleading picture of Gauguin's working method.

Crouching Tahitian Woman: Study for "Nafea Faaipoipo (When Will you Marry?)" [1892] (recto); Seated Tahitian Woman: Study for "Faaturuma (Reverie)" [1891] (verso), 1891/92.

(Recto) pastel and charcoal over preliminary drawing in charcoal, selectively stumped, and squared with black chalk; (verso) charcoal on wove paper. 555 x 480 mm.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Tiffany and Margaret Blake, 1944.578

This is one of the few drawings by Gauguin related to a painting (see fig. 46) that can truly be described as "preparatory" – developed specifically with the evolution of his painting in mind. A full-scale working drawing, it is one of only four that survive for paintings done on the first Tahitian trip.

Gauguin based the recto drawing on earlier sketches (see cat. no. 12). He then superimposed a grid on the drawing, "squaring" it to facilitate his freehand transfer of the image to the canvas. Since this drawing represents only one of the two overlapping figures that appear in both sketches and painting, it reveals how the artist went about making his paintings, constructing them from separate, isolated "parts." (See also fig. 47.)

Parau Hina Tefatou (Words of Moon and Earth), 1894/95

Pen and brown ink, brush and grey wash on wove paper, 220 x 193 mm. Signed at lower right, with the artist's stamp PGO.
Edward McCormick Blair, Chicago

The majority of the small-scale works on paper that Gauguin made after returning to France have their source in the paintings and sculptures he made in Tahiti. This was particularly true of prints and drawings such as *Parau Hina Tefatou* (which Gauguin intended for his *Noa Noa* text.

Here Gauguin recast the subject of an earlier wooden sculpture informed by his knowledge of Tahitian cosmology derived from reading Moerenhout's *Voyages to the Islands of the Great Ocean* of 1837. He depicted *Tefatou*, spirit of the earth, in dialogue with *Hina*, spirit of the moon, regarding human mortality. The scene is echoed in the text Gauguin began writing late

in 1893 devoted to Tahitian lore entitled *Ancien Culte Mahorie*:

Hina said to Fatou: Bring back man to life when he dies. Fatou replied: No, I shall never bring him back to life. The earth shall die, the vegetation shall die . . . also those that are nourished by it. . . . Hina replied: Do as you wish: as for me, I shall bring the moon back to life. And that which belonged to Hina continues to be, that which belongs to Fatou dies, and man must die.

This subject was of particular importance to Gauguin. He reproduced another drawing of the theme as the frontispiece for the catalogue of his 1893 exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery. The drawing shown here was likewise intended for reproduction, in the pages of *Noa Noa*.

CATALOGUE NOS. 15-25

Gauguin's album of woodcuts made to accompany his planned publication of his manuscript *Noa Noa* (1893/94). The sequence posited here is new to the Gauguin literature.

NB: The black and white impressions included in the exhibition were pulled from the original boxwood blocks by Pola Gauguin, the artist's youngest son, and published in Copenhagen in 1921 in an edition of one hundred sets. Except for the impression of *Auti Te Pape* (cat. no. 24), which was part of set no. 34, all other ones are from set no. 50.

Noa Noa (Perfume)

Woodcut printed from endgrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 358 x 204 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Print and Drawing Club, 1924.1197

In conceiving the print that inaugurates the series, an evocation of daily life in Tahiti, Gauguin drew on several sources. Principal among them was the painting he had made shortly after arriving in Tahiti, *I Raro Te Oviri (Under the Pandanus Trees)* (see fig. 56). For the print's various details, he looked to other of his paintings, as well as to his photographs of the Borobudur reliefs, the source of the small animal he included at top right. This link to

Javanese sculptures suggests that Gauguin had them in mind as he carved his woodblocks whose proportions and story-telling function they in fact echo.

Te Po (Night)

Woodcut printed from endgrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 206 x 356 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Print and Drawing Club, 1924.1199.

The second print takes us from the world of day to that night, which, as Gauguin noted in *Noa Noa*, Tahitians dreaded as the realm of "the legendary demons or specters, the *tupapaus*." In the foreground is a sleeping figure whose primitive fear of the dark, against which the candle defends, is echoed by its formal origins in the art of Giotto (see fig. 58). Behind this figure is Gauguin himself, his thoughtful pose – derived from a recent self-portrait (see fig. 57) – suggestive of his role as witness and narrator. Beside him is a *varua ino*, or manifestation of evil, separating him from the same *tupapau* that had haunted three of his Tahitian pictures dealing with the "terrifying words" associated with the "devil." As the sunflowerlike motif in which Gauguin inscribed his initials suggests, this is a world on which the artist's work sheds light.

Te Atua (The Gods)

Woodcut printed from endgrain boxwood, in black over red on Japan paper, 204 x 355 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Print Department Fund, 1943.527

In the third woodcut in the series, we move from the realm of mortals to that of the gods who created them and determined their fate. Here we find *Hina*, spirit of the moon, at the left, in conversation with *Tefatou*, as in Gauguin's drawing (see cat. no. 14) and sculpture (see fig. 59) and again, at right, alone and hieratic, as Gauguin had represented her in another wooden sculpture (see fig. 61). In the center is a figure from yet another statue (see fig. 60), formally inspired by Far Eastern sculptures of *Buddha*. Gauguin may have intended this figure to represent *Ta'aroa*, the androgynous creator god of the Polynesian universe, of whom *Hina*, in one of her manifestations, was the spouse.

L'Univers est créé
(*The Universe is Created*)

Woodcut printed from engrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 205 x 355 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Print and Drawing Club, 1924.1203

For his representation of the Creation, Gauguin drew upon a creation of his own, two watercolors with which he had decorated his manuscript *Ancien Culte Mahorie*. One depicts a fish with a lotus in its mouth, whose source is Egyptian art. In the other, Gauguin represented *Ta'aroa*, the creator god, in a shell (see fig. 62) from the sea whose waves crash in the background.

Maruru (Offerings of Gratitude)

Woodcut printed from endgrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 205 x 355 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Joseph Brooks Fair Fund and Gift of the Print and Drawing Club, 1924.1200

To represent the gratitude of humankind for the beneficence of the gods, Gauguin drew upon several paintings: a landscape representing both mountains and plains of Tahiti, *Fatata Te Moua (At the Foot of the Mountain)* (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg), and *Hina Maruru (Offerings of Gratitude to Hina)* (Private collection), an evocation of the country "in olden times," a golden age of peace in which the natives reverently attended to the large statues of the gods they had erected.

Woodblock for Maruru

Original boxwood matrix (from which the impressions have been pulled), 202 x 352 x 23mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Print and Drawing Club, 1940.91

Nave Nave Fenua
(*The Delightful Land*)

Woodcut printed from engrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 356 x 203 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Print and Drawing Club, 1924.1201

Based on an 1892 painting of the same title, Gauguin's representation of an edenic garden of earthly delights is home to a Tahitian Eve more "ancient" and "savage," as Gauguin informed the playwright Strindberg, than her Western counterpart. Based on Marquesan decorative carvings, the border at left announces that this is the realm of the *Other*. Nonetheless, it is the biblical myth of the Fall that the work clearly invokes; acknowledging the transposition by replacing the snake, which is foreign to Tahiti, with a native lizard as a symbol of the Devil.

Mahna No Varua Ino
(*The Devil Speaks*)

Woodcut printed from engrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 202 x 356 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Joseph Brooks Fair Collection, 1924.1196

In the inventory of his work Gauguin made in 1892, he referred to the painting on which he based this print as *Upaupa*, referring to the exuberant "fire dance" with its overtly sexual pelvic movements, performed by the couple in the fire's glow. Changing the title of the print to *The Devil Speaks*, Gauguin connected the realm of the sexual and procreative to that of sin and unlawful desire. Gauguin's composition here recalls that of his watershed Brittany picture *The Vision after the Sermon* (see fig. 24).

Te Faruru (Here We Make Love)

Woodcut printed from endgrain boxwood in ochre and black on Japan paper stained prior to printing with various hand-applied and transferred watercolors and waxy media, 356 x 203 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Clarence Buckingham Collection, 1950.158

A couple, seen at left in the previous woodcut, makes love in the flickering firelight. Especially in impressions printed by the artist, such as this one, the figures seem to dissolve into each

other, as if merging in the act of physical union. Yet the presence here of an evil spirit, or *varua ino*, floating above their heads suggests that, in a fallen world, the passions of physical love are inevitably compromised.

Auti Te Pape
(*Women at the River/ Sea*)

Woodcut printed from endgrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 203 x 356 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Albert Roullier Memorial Collection, 1926.96

The central figure in this woodcut derives from Gauguin's painting *Aha Oe Feii? (What! Are You Jealous?)* (see cat. no. 12, fig. 44), suggesting its presence here is to figure the jealousy that can be the aftermath of love. Turning her back on a joyous bathing scene that Gauguin incorporated from another of his paintings (see fig. 63), the lonely figure – Gauguin deleted here her companion in the painting (see cat. no. 27) – seems to embody a life-negating bitterness.

Manao Tupapau (The Spirit of the Dead Watches)

Woodcut printed from endgrain boxwood, in black and grey on China paper, 205 x 355 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Joseph Brooks Fair Fund, 1924.1198

In this print, conceived as the conclusion of his woodcut series, Gauguin returned to the realm of night and the subject of one of his most cherished Tahitian pictures (see cat. no. 26). As in the latter, nocturnal terror of unseen, malign forces is personified by the *tupapau*, represented hooded and in profile in the shadowy background. But the position of the frightened female has changed: no longer provocatively stretched out and meeting the viewer's gaze, she is curled up in a fetal position, the association with birth reinforced by the ovoid of light that contains her. Thus Gauguin enlarged here upon the theme of his painting, suggesting not only worldly fears of the spirit realm but the cycle of birth, life and death.

Manao Tupapau (The Spirit of the Dead Watches), 1893/94

Published in *L'Estampe originale*, VI, April - June 1894. Lithograph on stone made using crayon, brush and pen and lithographic ink, and scraper, printed in black, 424 x 694 mm (image 180 x 272 mm). Signed and inscribed in ink at bottom right *Ep.79/ Paul Gauguin*. Auckland City Art Gallery.

In 1893, journalist André Marty had launched a periodical publication of original prints he entitled *L'Estampe originale* and printed in an edition of one hundred. Over the next two years, he issued periodic installments containing prints by such important artists of the avant-garde as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Pierre Bonnard. A critical and commercial success, *L'Estampe originale* was perhaps the single most influential source of what came to be known as the Lithography Revival.

Gauguin responded to Marty's invitation and the exposure it promised by making a lithographic translation of the painting by the same name that he considered among the most important of his Tahitian oeuvre. He had sent his painting of 1892 to the three important exhibitions of his works held between the spring of 1893 (Copenhagen) and the winter of 1894 (Brussels); at the Paris exhibition, held in November 1893 at Durand-Ruel's gallery, the picture attracted considerable attention. Charles Morice, Gauguin's collaborator on the *Noa Noa* project, lauded *Manao Tupapau* in his enthusiastic review, while another critic actually reproduced it in his favorable account of the show.

In *Noa Noa*, Gauguin recounted the anecdote related to this picture, wherein he recalled returning to home at night to find his companion lying on her bed awake and rigid with fear of the *tupapaus* she believed lurked in the shadows. As in his painting, Gauguin included the *tupapau*, hooded and in profile, and phosphorescent emanations of the spirits, *hutu* flowers, which glow at night. In the lithograph, he added other specters of the night, including *Hina*, its presiding deity.

Aha Oe Feii? (What! Are You Jealous?), 1894

Watercolor transfer selectively heightened with brush and water-based colors, brown ink, and white chalk on Japan paper, 195 x 242 mm. Edward McCormick Blair, Chicago.

Based on a painting of the same title (see cat. no. 12, fig. 44), one of the most beautiful works made during Gauguin's first Tahitian stay, this delicate watercolor transfer is further testimony of the artist's desire, upon returning to France, to publicize his recent achievements through the media of prints and drawings.

Interestingly, this watercolor transfer is directly related to Gauguin's contemporary woodcut *Auti Te Pape* (see cat. no. 24). Indeed, the scale and placements of the figures in each composition correspond so precisely that it seems probable that Gauguin in some way made use of the matrix for his watercolor transfer to transfer the design to the woodblock surface. In the process of carving the woodblock, Gauguin first included and then removed the recumbent figure; in the final print, traces of her black hair remain, appearing like a rock to the left of the lone female. Such experimentation is typical of Gauguin. Anxious to publicize his recent work, he was by nature averse to the repetition that direct translations involve; in reproducing his compositions in different media, technical inventiveness was a source of new creative energy.

Man with an Ax, 1893/95

Reed pen and metal pen and brown ink and Indian ink heightened with brush and gouache on tracing paper, once folded and presently mounted on two sheets of wove paper, 388 x 280 mm. Signed and dedicated at bottom center in pen and brown ink: *PGO / à l'ami Daniel*. Edward McCormick Blair, Chicago

This work represents another instance of Gauguin's use of drawing as a means of disseminating his Tahitian imagery, following his return to France in 1893.

Here he translated his painting of the same subject done in 1891 (fig.64), which he evoked in a passage in *Noa Noa* and apparently considered among

his most important works. Gauguin had based his figure of the man wielding the ax on one of his reproductions of the Parthenon frieze (fig. 65). Included in the painting but absent here are the woman bent over the fishing nets in the canoe and the sailboat on the horizon.

Gauguin dedicated the drawing to his loyal and trusted friend Daniel de Monfreid. During both Gauguin's Tahitian stays, Monfreid was instrumental in helping the artist distribute the works he sent back to France.

Design for a Fan Decorated with Motifs from "Te Raau Rahi" [1891], 1893/95

Brush and gouache on bark cloth (*tapa*), 172 X 575 mm. Carrick Hill Collection, South Australia

This is one of at least five fans that Gauguin made employing motifs from his Tahitian paintings. Most, like this one, were made after he returned to France. Like some of his other works on paper, this fan was apparently intended as a keepsake. The primary source for this particular design was a painting of 1891 featuring what he called a "Maori house," possibly that which he had rented in Mataiea in the autumn of that year.

Gauguin embellished his composition at bottom with a semicircular frieze of Marquesan decorative motifs. These can be found on a wide variety of objects ranging from domestic utensils to tools of war. The stylized, masklike motif of pronounced "nostrils" and arabesque-shaped ears supporting spectacle - like forms Gauguin employed are seen on such objects as war clubs (see fig.66). According to some accounts, Gauguin was familiar with Marquesan designs prior to his visit to Tahiti. While there, he made rubbings of such objects and carved similar utensils himself.

The *tapa*, or barkcloth, Gauguin employed as the support for this watercolor seems to have held a particular attraction for him. His use of it in making the portfolio covers for his Tahitian documents (see cat. no. 10 and fig. 31 a & b) suggests he appreciated its status as an authentic

indigenous product. The sheet on which this fan was drawn originally included a design similar to that found on one of these portfolio covers (see fig. 67 and cat. no. 10). Gauguin took a considerable amount of tapa back with him to France, where he used it to decorate his studio (see fig. 51, Molard in Gauguin's Studio).

30

Buddha, 1898/99

Woodcut printed in black on Japan paper. Numbered in pen and ink: 1. The Art Institute of Chicago, Print and Drawing Department Funds, 1947.687

When Gauguin began making woodcuts again in 1898/99, he clearly had in mind traditions of so-called "primitive" carving. This image is directly inspired by a photograph of a sculpture representing Vishnu, from Central Java, Indonesia (see fig. 78). Not having understood the physical attributes of this multiarmed deity, Gauguin apparently thought it represented Buddha.

The photograph Gauguin owned and hung on the wall of his studio in Hiva Oa, in Atuona (see fig. 77) was the work of Isidore van Kinsbergen, commissioned by the government of the Dutch East Indies to record antiquities on the island of Java. It had been published in 1872 as part of an album, other photographs from which Gauguin also owned. They probably had come to him from Gustave Arosa.

Above the head of the deity, Gauguin added an embellishment not found in the photograph. Representing two worshippers before two *tikis*, the design originates in Marquesan carvings.

31

Te Atua (The Gods), 1899

Woodcut printed in black with touches of ocher on Japan paper, 244 x 277 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Print and Drawing Club, 1945.93

For this woodcut, Gauguin turned to his own work: the sculpted Breton roadside shrine he represented in *Christmas Eve* (Private collection), a painting done in France in 1894. In the print, he transformed the structure into its Polynesian equivalent, constructed

of lashed bamboo poles instead of stone, to house the Polynesian deities over whom *Taaroa* presides (at top). He effected a similar transformation to create the figure at right, inspired by the Virgin Mary, prominent, along with her attendant, in the Breton shrine featured in the 1894 painting. Like the earlier painting, this print is indebted both to Cambodian sculptures and Gauguin's photographs by Van Kinsbergen of the *Borobudur* reliefs. Gauguin has glued this print face-down, so the image is seen in reverse.

32

Te Atua (The Gods), circa 1898-9

Original woodblock (from which the impressions have been pulled). Polynesian teak wood, irregular, 24.1 x 28.6cm, Private Collection.

33

Frieze composed of the woodcuts *Change of Residence* and *Soyez amoureuses, vous serez heuresses* (*Be in Love and You will be Happy*)

Change of Residence

Woodcut printed in black, pasted down over an impression of a first state printed in ocher, 163 x 305mm. Numbered in pen and ink: 21. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Albert H. Wolf Memorial Collection, 1939.322

Soyez amoureuses, vous serez heuresses

Woodcut printed in black, pasted down over an impression of a first state printed in ocher. Numbered in pen and ink: 20. The Art Institute of Chicago, The Joseph Brooks Fair Collection, 1949.932

Of the group of fourteen woodcuts Gauguin made in 1898-99, all but two are related by virtue of their size, format, printing and composition in ways that allow them to be considered as pairs or even as friezes comprising two or more elements. In conceiving compositions that can be viewed in a friezelike, continuous unfolding, Gauguin was no doubt looking to his photographs of the *Borobudur* reliefs narrating the life of Buddha; their direct influence in this particular work is seen in the group of three figures that enter at left (see fig. 79). But, as was increasingly his tendency, Gauguin turned for inspiration to his own work. In its conception and inclusion of various motifs, the woodcut frieze echoes the roughly contemporaneous panel he carved for the dining room of

his house at Punaauia, on the west coast of Tahiti. Other images incorporated here derive from recent paintings.

Earlier sources abound. The title of the right half of this frieze – *Be in Love and You will be Happy* – evokes the relief of 1889 in which Gauguin had carved out his ambition to abandon a corrupt Europe for rejuvenating "primitive" experience. This had, in fact, proven more difficult than Gauguin had imagined a decade earlier, when the art he saw during his visits to museums inspired him to believe that an artistic "renaissance" might be possible. The ghosts of these visits — the shades of works by Delacroix, Mantegna and Solario (see figs. 5a - 7d) he had noted in his sketchbooks — are present here; disembodied, they hover over the anguished figure inspired by a Peruvian mummy in the Trocadéro Museum (see fig. 15) and beside the banderolle that bears the same message to which he had harkened at the outset of his initial Tahitian journey.

The continued optimism that this suggests informed Gauguin's decision, several years later, to change his own residence, leaving Tahiti for the Marquesas. There, for the entrance to his so-called "House of Pleasure," he would carve an ambitious decorative frieze in some ways anticipated by the woodcuts of 1898-99. Indeed, the inventory made at the time of Gauguin's death of the contents of his house records some forty-five woodcuts from this late series pasted to the walls.

Testimony to Gauguin's experimental approach to printmaking, the impressions shown here were realized following a particularly inventive procedure. Gauguin began by carving his design into the woodblocks and then printing them in ocher ink. He then worked the woodblocks further, refining his image while removing more of the woodblock's surface. This done, he printed the blocks in black ink on a very thin, transparent paper. He then took these impressions and pasted them directly over the earlier impressions from the block printed in ocher, thus achieving uniquely rich and evocative pictorial effects.

*Untitled (known as Woman
with a Cat), 1899/1902*

(Recto) transfer drawing in brownish black ink; (verso) graphite and blue- crayon pencil with brush and solvent washes in ochre on wove paper, 305 x 508 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago, through prior bequest of the Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, 1991.217

This enigmatic image exudes a raw eroticism unmatched in Gauguin's *oeuvre*. A native woman, naked, her chest pressed to the ground, head and haunches raised, gripping a catlike creature, is presented to us, as to the audience behind her, like a kind of cult figure. Above her is either a roof or curtain, partially decorated with patterns recalling plaited leaves and bearing the artist's name (see fig. 80). It is as if Gauguin is raising, or lowering, the curtain on the "ancient," "savage" Tahiti of his invention, a world populated by the offspring of the reliefs of *Borobudur*—here both the audience and archer—as well as by figures of European descent. For this incarnation of Gauguin's fierce *Oviri* was born of one of Degas's pastels of women bathing, which Gauguin had first copied in a sketchbook of 1888 (see fig. 81), had drawn upon for his painting *Otahi (Alone)* (Private collection) of 1893, and had recently incorporated into both the wooden relief for the dining room in his "House of Pleasure" (see fig. 82) and the figure of the prostrate worshipper in *Te Atua* (see cat. no. 31). Reborn here as an enigmatic sphinx, she is, with her wild cat, the embodiment of a savage sexuality that is Gauguin's ultimate response to Manet's *Olympia* (see fig. 26); this image of a Second Empire courtesan signified for Gauguin the European decadence that, more than a decade earlier, had precipitated his flight in search of spiritual and creative regeneration.

The designation No. 1, in the left margin, is by the hand of Ambroise Vollard, Gauguin's Paris-based dealer, who apparently featured this work as number one in the 1903 catalogue of Gauguin's transfer "monotypes."

*Design for a Fan Featuring a
Landscape and a Statue of the
Goddess Hina, 1900/1903*

Brush and gouache over preliminary drawing in graphite on Japan paper glued down to a wove paper support, 208 x 417 mm. Signed in the composition at lower right, in brush and red gouache: *PGO*. Edward McCormick Blair, Chicago

In this late fan design, made after his arrival in the Marquesas, Gauguin created a luminous and mythic world under the aegis of Hina, whose presence, left of center, dominates the landscape. The composition unfolds, from left to right, with a series of motifs from paintings Gauguin had made following his return to Tahiti in 1895. The motifs found to the right of Hina derive from Gauguin's most recent work, made in the Marquesas. Essentially retrospective in nature, this is a world where the logic of space and temporal sequence collapse. This is a landscape of memory and dream, it is Gauguin's consolation for the lost Eden he mourned.