

# Large Print Labels

## **Paul Gauguin: The Art of Invention**

July 21—September 15, 2019

Main Exhibition Galleries, East Building

## **Text Panels**

### **Paul Gauguin: The Art of Invention**

Throughout his career Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) was a radically experimental artist. He produced inventive work in a wide range of media including the paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, and ceramics seen in this exhibition. Gauguin was self-taught and first adopted the then avant-garde Impressionist technique in the 1870s. Thereafter, he pioneered a painting method of flat patterns and strong outlines in the mid-1880s that anticipated 20th-century abstract art. His wood sculptures and hand-molded ceramics also challenged accepted conventions. No other artist of the time pushed artistic boundaries toward abstraction in such a range of materials as Gauguin.

Gauguin's art was deeply influenced by his extensive travels around the world and his experience with a broad range of cultures. Born to a French father and French-Peruvian mother, Gauguin lived in Lima, Peru, as a child. As a young man he spent several years in the French merchant navy, voyaging from Brazil to India to the Arctic Circle. Subsequently, he traveled around France from Paris to Arles to the coast of Brittany. He also briefly lived in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Perhaps the most profound impact on Gauguin's art resulted from his travels to France's colonies. He spent several months in Martinique in the Caribbean and lived the later years of his life in Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands.

In Polynesia, Gauguin formed intimate relationships with several young women while remaining married to, yet estranged from, his Danish wife, Mette. Some of these girls bore children fathered by Gauguin.

Ultimately each decided to return to her own family after living with the artist. Gauguin died in the Marquesas without returning to Europe in 1903.

## Gauguin and Impressionism

Paul Gauguin, an important artist within the Impressionist movement, participated in five of the eight Impressionist exhibitions between 1879 and 1886, often represented by multiple works. The selections in this gallery show his experimentation with avant-garde, impressionistic techniques-loose brushwork, bright colors-in a range of genres.

Gauguin produced many landscape paintings and focused on capturing transient light effects. He also made studies of the nude form and of Parisian 19th-century life. Gauguin experimented not only as a painter but also a sculptor, as seen here with *The Singer*. Working in both of these media, he followed the example of other Impressionist artists, notably Edgar Degas.

Gauguin's family moved to Peru, where his mother had relatives, when he was very young. He lived a stable, privileged life there until he was six before returning to live in France. This history abroad influenced his work, especially his use of Peruvian textiles and ceramics as props in several of his paintings.

In 1873, at age 25, Gauguin married Mette Gad, a Danish woman he met the year before. Over the next 10 years the couple had five children and lived together in Paris. From the 1870s until 1882, Gauguin worked as a stockbroker, earning a good income, and he only pursued his art on a part-time basis.

## **From Denmark to Dieppe**

Following the 1882 French stock market crash, Gauguin traveled extensively in France, making trips to small towns near Paris as well as longer journeys to Normandy and Brittany. In the late summer of 1884, he moved his family from the French regional town of Rauen to Copenhagen, Denmark, where Mette's family resided. There, Mette worked as a translator while Gauguin worked for a company that manufactured tarpaulins, or heavy-duty waterproof cloths.

The Gauguin family lived together in Denmark for nearly a year. In the summer of 1885, Gauguin moved back to France with his son Clovis, leaving behind Mette and the rest of his children to focus on his artistic career. This was an important moment in the shaping of his artistic identity and his shift from life as a family man to a fully focused artistic experimenter and bohemian maverick. He traveled to the seaside resort of Dieppe, Normandy, in June 1885. A fellow painter met him there and described "the extravagance of his attire and a certain wild air."

Gauguin's early wealth, earned during the 1870s from his job as a stockbroker, enabled him to acquire many works by his fellow Impressionists. His collection included several paintings by his close friend Camille Pissarro and a number of works by Paul Cezanne, which inspired his own versions in different media from fan-shaped paintings to ceramics.

## **The Allure of the “Primitive: Brittany and Martinique**

By the 1880s, Gauguin described himself as a "savage" within the increasingly urbanized world of 19th-century Europe. At this time he sought out cultures that promised to satisfy his thirst for an alternative lifestyle.

Between 1886 and 1890, he made several trips to the remote French province of Brittany in the far west of France where the peasant inhabitants cultivated their own unique customs, language, and dress.

Gauguin wrote, "I love Brittany. Here I find the wild, the primitive. When my clogs echo on this granite earth, I hear the dull, muffled, powerful note that I am seeking in my painting." In 1887, Gauguin also spent several months in the French colony of Martinique in the Caribbean. Just before traveling there, he described this island as "almost uninhabited, free and fertile."

Gauguin's reductive view of Martinique and Brittany as "primitive" contrasts with our contemporary understanding of these colonial and regional cultures. Both Brittany and Martinique have their own complex and layered histories. Brittany was steeped in medieval traditions that fused Catholic and local beliefs and emphasized festivals and ritual processions. Martinique had a centuries-long history of musical, folkloric, and artistic production. Gauguin found extensive inspiration in these places, producing work in a wide range of media from paintings to wood carvings to ceramics.

## Tahiti

In 1891, Gauguin traveled to the Polynesian island of Tahiti, which had been a French colony since 1880. He wrote: "What I want to do there is found the Studio of the Tropics... I'll go out there and live withdrawn from the so-called civilized world and frequent only the so-called savages." Gauguin's words indicate his limited and superficial early knowledge of Tahitian culture.

When he arrived on the island, he was disappointed by the impact of European customs on Tahiti's capital, Papeete. For nearly a century, European missionaries had worked to convert the indigenous population to Catholicism and to suppress their ancient religious practices. By the time of Gauguin's arrival, traditional dress was long replaced by clothing that covered the whole body while sexual freedom was repressed and tattoos were forbidden.

Gauguin's early works on Tahiti engage with the complex tensions surrounding the impact of French influence on the island. He represented women, for example, in both indigenous and missionary dress. His landscapes, however, rarely show signs of modernity, such as roads or carriages that were indeed present on the island. Gauguin collected art objects traded from the nearby Marquesas Islands. The decorative patterns of these sculptures and domestic objects, such as bowls, informed his own work.

## Gauguin and Maori Art

After more than two years in Tahiti, Gauguin returned to Paris in 1893. He continued to produce work inspired by his rich memories of the island and even constructed a "Studio of the South," full of Polynesian objects. Yet in 1895, he once again sailed for Tahiti, stopping for 10 days in New Zealand, where he saw many examples of Maori art at the Auckland Institute and Museum.

Gauguin was fascinated by Maori culture and, on one occasion, remarked, "What a religion the ancient Oceanic religion is. What a marvel! My brain is bursting with it." His first-hand experience of Maori art greatly impacted his practice, encouraging him to include related sculptures in his paintings and to incorporate traditional patterns into his designs. This gallery includes many examples of Maori sculpture and objects similar to those that Gauguin would have seen. He described such work as "a very advanced decorative art."

Gauguin remained in Tahiti for six years from 1895 until 1901. During this period, his work fluctuated between naturalistic views of everyday life on the island and more imaginative compositions in which he evoked the spirit world that remained firmly established among the Tahitian indigenous population.

Gauguin's luminous color was well suited to the evocation of the lush tropical landscape.

## Gauguin and Religion

Gauguin was fascinated with spirituality and often explored the similarities between different religious practices and beliefs. During the final years of his life on the remote Marquesas Islands, Gauguin's thoughts on religion culminated in his final essay, *Modern Thought and Catholicism*, written in 1902.

In the manuscript, Gauguin explored the connections between Christianity and other world religions, including ancient Egyptian theology, Buddhism, and Polynesian beliefs. He also offered a critique of the institution of the Catholic Church, specifically its approach to marriage.

Gauguin's interest in religion is apparent in his prints, an important medium for him. When he moved to Polynesia in 1891, he worked primarily with woodcut prints, a technique reminiscent of his earlier carved-wood sculptures. Several of the prints on view here come from his important series *Noa Noa*, a group of 10 woodcuts that explores aspects of Polynesian culture and religion. He frequently experimented with printing on different materials and incorporated color in unprecedented ways.

## Gauguin's Life in Polynesia

Gauguin left his wife Mette and four of their children behind in 1885 when he departed Copenhagen for Paris in pursuit of his artistic career. Gauguin and Mette remained in contact but were estranged for the remainder of the artist's life. In Polynesia, Gauguin had intimate relationships with several young Polynesian women. He also experienced bankruptcy and illness from syphilis. Gauguin's journals and correspondence provide details about several *vahines* (the Tahitian word for "women") whom he often depicted in his work.

Several prints on view in this gallery may represent Teha'amana, who was about 13 years old when she met Gauguin. They lived together from 1892 to 1893. Teha'amana was pregnant by August 1892, but there is no further record of a child. After Gauguin returned to Paris in 1893, she married another man.

During Gauguin's second stay in Tahiti, from 1895 to 1901, he lived with Pau'ura a Tai, who was 15 years old. They had a daughter who died in infancy, and a son, Emile Marae a Tai, whom she raised on her own. Pau'ura a Tai refused to travel with Gauguin to live in the Marquesas.

When he settled in the Marquesas in 1901, Gauguin lived with Vaeoho Marie-Rose, the 14-year-old daughter of a local chief. She became pregnant in 1902 and left Gauguin to return home for the birth of their daughter, Tahiatikaomata Vaeoho Marie-Antoinette. Neither Vaeoho nor their daughter returned to live with Gauguin.

## LABELS

### Gallery 242: Gauguin and Impressionism

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Portrait of Mette Gad, c.1873

pencil on paper

This tiny, delicately sketched pencil drawing represents Mette Gad, Gauguin's Danish wife. The two met when Mette visited Paris from her hometown of Copenhagen, and they married in 1873, settling in Paris. In that year, Gauguin described Mette as "so precious a pearl" and added "I will do everything possible, and even impossible, so that she will not regret leaving her friends." Gauguin probably intended this drawing, made in the year of their marriage, to be a keepsake to carry around with him.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.131

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Houses near the Water, 1872  
oil on paper

This small oil sketch is one of Gauguin's earliest known paintings and shows a nondescript rural scene with a pond and a few houses. The work was probably painted in 1874, the year of the first Impressionist exhibition, which Gauguin is known to have visited. His technique of rapidly applied brushstrokes suggests the influence of the Impressionists.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.126

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Landscape from Viroflay, 1875  
oil on canvas

Here Gauguin painted an effect of dappled light that falls through tall trees and across a secluded rural path. A woman and her child walking along the path seem tiny in comparison to the large trees. The scene was probably painted outdoors, and it depicts the Viroflay forest in the southwestern suburbs of Paris. Gauguin's early experiments in capturing transient light reflect an interest that he shared with the Impressionists.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.133

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Sailing Vessel in Moonlight, 1878  
oil on canvas

In this lively moonlight image, Gauguin captured an expansive view centered on a silhouetted ship that pulls a tiny rowboat behind it. The wind whips across the choppy waves while the distant shoreline, possibly of Denmark, is dotted with windmills. The dark palette seen here is unusual in Gauguin's output, as the artist favored bright colors throughout his career. This work was probably painted for the Paris Salon, the official government art exhibition in the capital, and it was refused by the Salon Jury for unclear reasons in 1878.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.132

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Garden in Snow, 1879

oil on canvas

In this painting, Gauguin represented a snowscape with a screen of thin, bare trees delicately outlined against a background of houses. Snow scenes were a favored subject for Impressionists, and this work enabled Gauguin to explore the effects of light and winter weather conditions. In particular, he showed the contrast between the complementary colors of yellow and violet, with the latter used to portray shadowed areas.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long term loan from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.139

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Figures in a Garden, or The Painter's Family in the Garden, rue Carcel, c.1881

oil on canvas

In this unfinished portrait, Gauguin portrayed his children Clovis (on the ground), Aline (standing), and Jean René (in the stroller) alongside a seated woman, possibly his wife Mette or a nurse. They gather in a sunny garden outside the artist's apartment and studio on the rue Carcel, where they lived in the 1880s. Gauguin often painted views of this garden in different weather conditions, exploring one subject through a series of paintings much like his Impressionist contemporaries. This work may have been exhibited in the seventh Impressionist exhibition in 1882.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long term loan from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.135

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

The Singer, 1880

mahogany wood, plaster, paint, and gilt

In this relief sculpture, Gauguin depicted a cabaret singer on stage carrying a bouquet of flowers following her performance. This work exemplifies the artist's early skill as a sculptor, evident in the accomplished modeling of the singer's facial features. Gauguin created the flowers by adding plaster to the wood. As was often his practice, he also painted this sculpture, adding gilt to the flowers and background and red for the beads of the headband.

The Singer highlights Gauguin's interest in capturing Parisian modern life, inspired by the example of his friend Edgar Degas, who produced his own sculptures, such as *The Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* (see image). The Singer was shown at the sixth Impressionist exhibition in 1881.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.157

Unknown French artist  
Planks for a newel post, 17th century  
oak wood and paint

These carved wooden planks, along with the fruit basket nearby, originally decorated a newel post or support column of a stair bannister. Gauguin collected these architectural elements as part of his fascination with woodcarving. His own wooden sculptures, seen elsewhere in this exhibition, are sometimes inspired by decorative carvings such as these.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.162 –.164

Unidentified Aymará artist, Bolivia  
Poncho, 18th–19th century  
camelid wool and natural dyes

Three panels of finely woven cloth join to create a symmetrical array of vertical polychrome stripes.

After Spanish textile workshops introduced the poncho form to the South American Andes as a colonial style of dress in the 16th century, indigenous Aymará and Quechua peoples made their own versions for men to wear. This poncho reflects ancient artistic techniques in the Andean highlands such as hand-spinning alpaca fibers, finishing all edges on the loom, and creating a woven structure that highlights vertical warp yarns.

Gauguin collected textiles similar to this one, inspired by his Peruvian background. An example is evident in the background of the nearby painting, *Woman Sewing*.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Elissa and Paul Cahn  
437:2018

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Woman Sewing, or Nude Study, 1880  
oil on canvas

This painting represents Gauguin's first picture of a nude figure and shows his realistic, un-idealized treatment of the female form. A young woman sits absorbed in her sewing practice with a thimble on the third finger of her right hand. This staged scene was set in Gauguin's Parisian studio.

Hung on the wall behind, in addition to a mandolin, is a Peruvian textile that belonged to the artist, a reference to his heritage. The painting was shown at the sixth Impressionist exhibition in 1881 with the simple title, *Nude Study*.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long term loan from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.138

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Portrait of Charlotte Flensburg, c.1882  
pastel on paper

This drawing depicts Charlotte Flensburg, a pianist and music teacher in Paris—her profession is identified by the musical notes in the background. The portrait illustrates Gauguin’s innovative use of pastel. He conveyed the variations in tone on her dress and face using short, crosshatched strokes and layers of pigment. Pastel became popular in the late 19th century, and Gauguin, like many of his contemporaries, favored the medium because it combined the immediacy of drawing with the rich color of painting.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.127

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Still Life with Flowers, 1882  
oil on canvas

At first glance, this appears to be a straightforward floral still life, a common subject for artists in the late 19th century, and one Gauguin chose frequently in the 1880s. Here he depicted a bouquet of chrysanthemums in a decorative planter on a table with a small Japanese-style book nearby. Yet the right edge of the painting also illustrates part of a painted woodcarving, possibly a bedpost, which highlights Gauguin's growing interest in wood sculpture.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long term loan from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.137

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Garden in the Snow, c.1883  
oil on canvas

Gauguin painted this view of a wintery garden from his apartment on the rue Carcel in Paris. He played up the delicate, snow-covered branches on the trees with light, sketchy strokes. He also used a greater range of colors than his earlier image of the garden in snow from 1879, on view nearby. Gauguin represented the sky with varied, diagonally hatched lines of color, suggesting brisk snowfall during a storm.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long term loan from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.134

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Landscape from Osny, 1883  
oil on canvas

In this painting, the road in the foreground disappears to the left at a steep incline, which dramatically condenses the space. The houses are tightly arranged in the middle, effectively blocking the viewer off from the rest of the landscape. This deliberately cropped and flattened composition highlights Gauguin's experimentations with spatial organization, as he moved toward a more abstract painting style. Gauguin painted this work in Osny, a small town northwest of Paris, where he traveled with his friend and fellow Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.111

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Landscape with Tall Trees, or Poplar-Lined Lane, Osny,  
1883

oil on canvas

Gauguin painted this landscape in a surprising vertical format, rather than the more traditional horizontal orientation. The tall poplar trees make up over half of the image and further emphasize the verticality of the scene. Presumably painted during the summer of 1883, when Gauguin was working in Osny, France, this picture shows the considerable influence of his mentor, French Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro, with whom he worked closely in the 1880s.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.124

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Landscape Study, c.1882

oil on canvas

In this small study, Gauguin depicted a hillside in a landscape using an asymmetrical view that fills the majority of the composition. He explored a range of colors for the grass, including green, blue, red, and violet, hinting at the influence of Impressionist painters like Camille Pissarro and Claude Monet. The leafless trees on the hill suggest this was painted in the winter, possibly while Gauguin was with Pissarro in Pontoise, a small suburb outside of Paris.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.128

Unknown artist  
Green vessel, 1870s  
glazed stoneware

This vessel was part of Gauguin's own art collection, which he began as a young man. He owned numerous ceramic works like this one, in addition to paintings, sculptures, and textiles. He would often use objects from his collection as props in his paintings. This particular vessel appeared in a still life painting from the 1870s (see image).

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.141

Unknown French artist  
painted by Paul Gauguin, 1880s  
Fruit basket, part of a newel post, 17th century  
oak wood and paint

Gauguin painted this 17th-century carving in vibrant red, green, and yellow. Originally, this fruit basket and the carved planks nearby were part of a stair railing post. These objects highlight Gauguin's interest in the decorative arts. They also inspired ornamental carvings Gauguin made on his own wooden furniture in the 1880s and later sculptures from Martinique and Tahiti.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.161

## Gallery 243: From Denmark to Dieppe

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Jug, 1886–87

unglazed stoneware, decorated with slip, glaze, and gold

Vase, 1886–87

unglazed stoneware, decorated with slip and gold

These two vessels illustrate Gauguin's early experiments with ceramics, a medium he began exploring in earnest in 1886. Unlike most French potters, Gauguin shaped his vessels by hand, creating roughly-textured pots in unique shapes. These objects also highlight his careful study of the innovative art of his time, as evidenced by the decorative elements he chose for the vessels. The three-handled jug features a horseman after a painting by the French painter Eugène Delacroix. The square-shaped vase depicts a lightly incised harvest scene inspired by Paul Cézanne's *The Harvest*, which Gauguin owned (see image).

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.143, .146

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
French Landscape after Cézanne, 1885  
gouache on canvas

French Landscape, Fan Project, 1885  
gouache on canvas

In these fan-shaped paintings, Gauguin illustrated two French landscapes in different styles. The top fan shows a view of the arid landscape of the South of France; its inspiration comes from a painting by Paul Cézanne in Gauguin's personal collection (see image). Note the way it carefully mimics Cézanne's geometrical style in the simplified trees and broad, flat swathes of land. The bottom fan is more Impressionistic, with short visible brushstrokes reminiscent of Gauguin's mentor Camille Pissarro. This example depicts a lush landscape, probably near Paris.

Gauguin, like his contemporaries, often painted images in the shape of fans, a form borrowed from Japanese and Chinese art, which was popular in France at the time.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.123, .125

Camille Pissarro French, 1830–1903

Landscape from the Pontoise Area, Peasant Walking  
along a Path, 1878

oil on canvas

Camille Pissarro had already been traveling to Pontoise, just northwest of Paris, for over a decade when he made this painting of a peasant woman in the woods. The painting illustrates his Impressionistic style, including the use of visible brushstrokes and bright colors, which would influence Gauguin during the late 1870s and early 1880s. Gauguin owned this painting by 1879, when he lent it to the fourth Impressionist exhibition. It was praised there for its depiction of the Pontoise landscape.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long term loan  
from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.167

Camille Pissarro French, 1830–1903

Landscape from the Pontoise Area, A Peasant Walking  
along a Wooded Path, c.1880

tempera on canvas

Gauguin and Camille Pissarro were close friends and often painted together on their excursions outside of Paris in the 1870s and 1880s. Gauguin owned this painting by Pissarro, which was shown in the sixth Impressionist exhibition in 1881. It highlights Pissarro's fascination with the representation of peasants in colorful, light-filled landscapes. Gauguin copied the peasant figure into one of his own paintings, *The Queen's Mill, Østervold, on view nearby*.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long term loan  
from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.166

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Coast at Dieppe, 1885

oil on canvas

During the summer of 1885, Gauguin traveled alone to the Normandy coastal town of Dieppe, a well-known tourist retreat. Here, he represented vacationers in bright straw hats and two groups of bathers alongside fishing nets to the right and fishing boats beyond. Gauguin structured his composition with receding horizontal planes to emphasize the waves and depths of the water. He further animated his surfaces with areas of silvery gray and orange hues on the shore as well as passages of pink and purple across the waves. The painting was probably shown in the last Impressionist exhibition in 1886.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long-term loan from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.140

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Tree-Lined Road, Rouen II, 1885  
oil on canvas

Gauguin painted this work in Copenhagen as a memory of his time in the French regional town of Rouen in Normandy, where he had lived in 1884. It highlights his vibrant use of color, notably in the play of the complementary colors of red and green in the tree foliage.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.130

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
The Queen's Mill, Østervold, 1885  
oil on canvas

This painting, made outdoors in the spring of 1885, features a distant windmill in a park close to the center of Copenhagen. Gauguin animated this scene with a figure walking along a path and a moored rowboat. He wrote to Camille Pissarro in April of 1885, "I believe I can affirm that there is enormous progress [in my work]. I feel it is softer, clearer and more luminous without a change in method." This painting embodies the new luminosity that Gauguin felt he had achieved in his painting.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.122

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Skaters in Frederiksberg Gardens, 1884  
oil on canvas

In this scene of a popular Copenhagen garden in late 1884, trees are bare but warm fall colors remain visible throughout much of the composition. Several figures skate on the frozen lake, and one has fallen down. Gauguin wrote to Camille Pissarro about the Danish winter, “Copenhagen is very picturesque and where I live one can paint very characteristic and amusing things... At the moment the temperature is ten degrees below zero and sledges circulate on the street.”

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.129

## Gallery 244A: The Allure of the “Primitive”: Brittany and Martinique

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Portrait Head, 1887–88

unglazed stoneware

On this vessel Gauguin represented the powerful and striking features of an unidentified Martinique woman. She wears a patterned headscarf decorated in squares of red and green. Gauguin was eager to learn about the island’s customs and people. He told his wife Mette: “This time, I write you from Martinique where I hope to stay for a while...negroes and negresses are milling around all day murmuring their creole songs and perpetually chattering...I cannot tell you how enthusiastic I am about life in the French colonies...”

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.150

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Still Life with Onions and Japanese Woodcut, c.1889  
oil on canvas

A group of brightly colored onions in yellow and red is flanked by an apple at bottom left. Just behind sits a pot, which may well have been one of Gauguin's own ceramic creations. The Japanese woodcut to the right, perhaps showing a kabuki theatre actor, highlights Gauguin's fascination with Japanese prints, which he collected.

Gauguin's interest in flat forms and strong outlines was undoubtedly encouraged by his awareness of art from Japan. His interest and experimentation reveal his ongoing desire to explore new artistic approaches.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.116

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Landscape from Brittany with Breton Women, 1888  
oil on canvas

Here the profiles of two Breton women are emphasized by the elaborate forms of their coiffes, or headdresses, strongly outlined in Prussian blue paint. The headdresses cast an abstracted shadow around a dog while a cow descends a hill towards the meeting of two paths painted in pink. This work dates from Gauguin's second visit to Brittany in 1888, when he wrote to an artist friend, "A hint—don't paint too much direct from nature. Art is an abstraction..."

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.112

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Landscape from Pont-Aven, 1888  
oil on canvas

Gauguin depicted a young Breton boy adjusting his wooden clog while his calf grazes on a hillside. The painting portrays a recognizable region near the village of Pont-Aven, but it also bears hints of Gauguin's increasingly abstract painting style. He simplifies the boy into rounded patterns, outlined with blue pigment, while the calf twists its body in such a way that it appears headless. The flattened areas of color in the background, broken up by vertical elements like the trees and church steeple, illustrate Gauguin's growing interest in decorative pattern making and bold color over a sense of spatial depth and illusion of reality.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. On long-term loan from the National Gallery of Denmark 2019.136

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Breton Girl, 1889  
oil on canvas

Gauguin's resting cowherd dominates the foreground of this painting; she looks on as her cows graze in the distance. The girl wears a long blue dress with a dark hood—the traditional costume of Le Pouldu, a small, unindustrialized coastal village in Brittany. Gauguin was fascinated by the peasants of Le Pouldu, whose lives were rooted in medieval traditions, including their garments, regional religious beliefs, and agricultural labor. Life in Le Pouldu symbolized what Gauguin saw as “primitivism,” and represented an escape from the modern world.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.113

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Two Children, c.1889

oil on canvas

This portrait depicts the children of Gauguin's friend, Emile Schuffenecker, a fellow stockbroker-turned-painter. Schuffenecker's daughter, Jeanne, appears to sit in a chair while her brother, Paul, sits on the floor behind her.

Gauguin had begun to use a vivid color palette by this time, with bright yellow, rich blue, and pale pink dominating the composition. The space of the room is flattened with a curved line between the floor and the background wall, which creates a topsy-turvy visual sensation.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.119

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Reclining Woman with a Fan, 1889  
oak wood and paint

A woman reclines within a verdant setting, holding a red fan behind her head that resembles a halo. Leering male heads appear in the background while a strange goat-like animal hovers in the sky. As with his other panels, Gauguin adopted a self-consciously crude approach to his carving, rebelling against the polish and finish of more conventional French sculpture of the time, such as that of the prominent academic artist Jean-Léon Gérôme (see image).

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.158

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Woman with Mangoes, 1889

oak wood and paint

This panel was made in Brittany but was inspired by Gauguin's memories of Martinique. Gauguin inscribed the word "Martinique" in the lower right hand corner. The image features subjects he would have encountered on the island: the central figure of a woman picking fruit from a tree, a goat at her feet, two monkeys picking fruit, and two heads in the upper corners. Gauguin painted this oak panel in greens, reds, yellows, and whites—some of his preferred colors.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.159

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

The Ondines, 1889

oak wood and paint

In this carved panel, Gauguin utilized the rough texture of the wood to create an image of waves on a turbulent sea. The two women in the water mimic the shapes and directions of the swells as they lean into the waves. These figures are Ondines, or water spirits, which were popular subjects in 19th-century literature and music. They often symbolized fertility, based on the close associations between women and nature. Gauguin frequently depicted this motif during his career in a range of media.

Private Collection, St. Louis 2019.168

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Eve with Serpent and Other Animals, 1889  
oak wood and paint

Here, Gauguin created a stylized or unnaturalistic version of Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden as described in the biblical Old Testament. A voluptuous Eve stands with her back to the viewer, focusing on the snake wrapped around the tree to the left. A strange owl, a horned goat-like head, and a mask-like moon appear above her. The composition emphasizes Gauguin's decorative style, with its framing and curvilinear forms, and anticipates the imagery in his later paintings and prints from Tahiti.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.160

Ernest Chaplet French, 1835–1909  
made by Haviland and Company  
Vase, 1882–85  
stoneware with matte glaze and gilding

This monumental vase features one of Ernest Chaplet's most innovative techniques: the use of matte glazing. The glaze created a flat, unvarnished base color upon which Chaplet added ornamental embellishments like a flowering tree branch and various birds. The design on this vase was influenced by Japanese color woodblock prints, which were extremely popular among artists and collectors in late 19th-century France. Japanese art also influenced Gauguin's own painting, as he began to shift from an Impressionistic manner to a style that emphasized flat space, bright color, and simplified forms.

Saint Louis Art Museum, The Lopata Endowment Fund  
15:2015

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Vase, 1886–87

glazed stoneware

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.144

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Jar, 1886–87

unglazed stoneware decorated with colored slips

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.142

These two vases exemplify Gauguin's interest in subjects from Brittany, which he first visited in 1886. The rough, unfinished surfaces of these unique objects offered a marked contrast to the polished elegance of many other late 19th-century French ceramics that were produced in large numbers for international markets in Europe and America. The three-handled vase is one of only a few glazed objects from this period. It features a seated Breton shepherd girl surrounded by sheep. The lid of the unglazed jar also has a Breton girl flanked by sheep. Another sheep stands on the lower rim of the vessel. Gauguin referred to his ceramics as his "monstrosities," but he also hoped that they would sell, even noting in 1887 that "ceramics will be my salvation."

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Bottle, 1887– 88

glazed stoneware with areas outlined in gold

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.151

Ernest Chaplet French, 1835–1909

Bottle Vase, c.1889–1904

glazed porcelain

Saint Louis Art Museum, Richard Brumbaugh Trust in memory of Richard Irving Brumbaugh and Grace Lischer Brumbaugh, and funds given by Jason Jacques 44:2006

Gauguin's ceramic works, like the bottle with two masks here, are unconventional for their irregular surfaces and unusual forms. Gauguin learned to work with clay from one of the pre-eminent French ceramicists, Ernest Chaplet, in 1886 and 1887. Chaplet's designs, like his tall bottle vase, are delicate and refined, but they also illustrate his own innovative approach to decoration. For this work, Chaplet rejected the European decorative tradition of painting detailed motifs on the vessel's surface in favor of a more abstract rich red-brown glazing. Chaplet's experimental spirit doubtlessly influenced Gauguin's own inventive approach to ceramics.

Jean-Joseph-Marie Carriès French, 1855–1894

Gourd Vase, c.1890

glazed stoneware with gilding

Saint Louis Art Museum, Richard Brumbaugh Trust in  
memory of Richard Irving Brumbaugh and Grace Lischer  
Brumbaugh and the Lopata Endowment Fund 136:2011

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Vase, 1887–88

glazed stoneware with touches of gold

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.152

While in Ernest Chaplet's studio, Gauguin encountered another inventive ceramicist, Jean-Joseph-Marie Carriès, whom he greatly admired. Carriès' vase was inspired by Japanese pottery that emphasized simplicity and naturalism rather than ostentatious decoration. He used brown and ochre glazes, which he allowed to drip in random patterns. This method created a sense of rustic spontaneity that resonated with Gauguin's own approach, as seen here. Both Carriès and Gauguin explored organic shapes for their vases, such as the undulating form of gourds in these examples.

Unidentified Moche artist, Peru

Stirrup Spout Vessel in the Form of a Portrait Head,

c.400–600

ceramic and pigment

Stirrup Spout Vessel in the Form of a Mythical Figure,

c.200–600

ceramic and pigment

Distinctive stirrup spout bottles, such as these examples, consist of a main chamber below an arched “stirrup” and single spout on top. Stirrup spout vessels are among the oldest ceramic forms found in the Andean region.

The ancient Peruvian vessels on view here were likely used in rituals that routinely involved drink offerings of chicha, a fermented maize beer, and feasting. Based on well-documented archaeological, historical, and contemporary evidence, ritual consumption of food and drink was an important manifestation of power and social relationships in the ancient Andes.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Purchase 5:1932, 74:1942

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Vessel, 1887–88

glazed stoneware with touches of gold

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.153

Unidentified Cupisnique artist, Peru

Vessel in the Form of a Feline Head, 1200–400 BC

ceramic

Saint Louis Art Museum, Purchase 16:1969

The open mouth, exposed teeth, and pointed fangs suggest a jaguar, a common creature portrayed in Andean art. As the largest and most feared predator in the American tropics, the jaguar can cover vast expanses of ground, climb trees, and unlike most other cats, is an excellent swimmer. Note the textured appearance of the animal's head. Cupisnique artists used various decorative techniques, such as stamping, burnishing, incising, and modeling, to create details on monochrome ceramics such as this one.

Unidentified Moche artist, Peru

Vessel in the Form of a Portrait Head, c.400–600

ceramic and pigment

This large vessel likely represents a captive who, like many Moche prisoner figures, has a central wedge-shaped lock of hair. The individual wears a double set of gold discs suspended from the ears by wire loops. Faint traces of pigment can still be seen around the figure's cheeks, representing face paint. The Moche are noted for their prolific use of realistic imagery, especially in ceramic portrait heads. Moche artists skillfully captured the facial features of specific individuals and instilled a lifelike quality in each portrait.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Morton D. May 216:1978

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Double vessel, 1886–87

unglazed stoneware, decorated with slip

Vase, 1886–87

unglazed stoneware, decorated with slip, glaze, and gold

Pot, 1886-87

unglazed stoneware, decorated with slip, glaze, and gold

These three vessels highlight Gauguin's inventive ceramic techniques. Using a combination of modeled, three-dimensional forms and lightly incised line drawings, Gauguin created an interplay of sculptural volume and flat surfaces. As seen in these examples, he often depicted images of rural life—shepherdesses, sheep, geese, and other animals—that he would have seen during his stay in Brittany in 1886.

These vessels also illustrate Gauguin's range of unique ceramic shapes. Unlike his mentor Ernest Chaplet, whose elegant vases are on view nearby, Gauguin preferred to construct his works by hand rather than on a potter's wheel. This allowed him greater freedom to create varied shapes in a rough, non-traditional asymmetrical style. The art critic Albert Aurier celebrated this aspect of Gauguin's ceramics, saying that he “kneaded more soul than clay.”

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.148, .145, .147

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Portrait vase, 1887–88

unglazed stoneware decorated with slip, glaze and gold

This unglazed stoneware vessel shows a woman wearing a snake belt. It represents Louise Schuffenecker, the wife of the artist Emile Schuffenecker, a friend and financial supporter of Gauguin. The presence of the snake, whose eye is highlighted in green and gold, may suggest that Gauguin presented Louise as Eve from the biblical Old Testament. According to this text, Eve was tempted by a snake and then gave her companion, Adam, fruit to eat from the forbidden tree. Note that Louise's necklace is also enlivened by touches of green.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.149

## Andean Ceramics and Gauguin

These ancient Peruvian ceramics represent a full range of styles and subject matter. Reflecting diverse art forms and techniques, they vividly document ancient Peruvians' daily life, ceremonies, and beliefs. Gauguin was very familiar with such objects. He would have seen them growing up in Lima, Peru, and his mother, who was of Peruvian descent, brought back a group of ancient Andean vessels when the family returned to France in 1854. Gauguin recalled them and his time in Peru with great affection in *Avant et après* (Before and After), the journal he wrote during the last months of his life in 1903.

This case includes a vase by Gauguin with the face of a woman, which was inspired by Peruvian ceramics.

## Gallery 244B: Tahiti

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Tahitian Woman with a Flower (Vahine no te tiare), 1891  
oil on canvas

Gauguin represented a young Tahitian woman in a type of missionary dress fringed with a white collar and cuffs. This attire was recommended for islanders by the Catholic Church. Gauguin later described her: “She was not at all handsome according to our [European] aesthetic rules. She was beautiful.” The presence of the flowers, including a white flower in the woman’s hair and a floating yellow bloom, adds sensuality to the scene. Here Gauguin created visual drama by offsetting complementary colors of violet and yellow as well as red and green.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.114

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Landscape from Tahiti with Four Figures, 1892

oil on canvas

This scene probably represents Mataeia, a small village on the south coast of Tahiti. Gauguin moved there after becoming disillusioned with the overly “civilized” environment of the capital, Papeete. The central structure visible through the trees may have been Gauguin’s house and the smaller building to the left his kitchen hut.

Three of the women wear traditional Tahitian skirts in red and blue, decorated with patterns of yellow flowers. This painting is an example of Gauguin’s interest in representing everyday life on the island.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.115

Unidentified Enata/Enana (Marquesan) artist,  
Marquesas Islands  
Stilt Step (tapuva'e), 19th century  
wood

With oversized head and eyes and short flexed legs, this tiki, or human figure, displays the dynamism of individuals who used this stilt step. A tapuva'e would have been attached to a tall, light-weight wooden pole using plant fiber bindings. Marquesans wore stilt steps during races and contests in which the objective was to knock an opponent down. Although a source of entertainment, these competitions took place during important festivals and sacred occasions that invoked and honored ancestors and deities.

A competitor's success indicated his strength and mana (spirit), as well as that of his family or group. Gauguin knew of similar objects and made a drawing after a Marquesan stone image that he probably saw in Auckland on his visit to New Zealand in 1895.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Morton D. May  
1504:1983

Unidentified Enata/Enana (Marquesan) artist,  
Marquesas Islands  
Club ('u'u), early–mid 19th century  
wood and sennit fiber

War clubs such as this are made of a dense casuarina (ironwood) that Marquesans called toa, also the word for “warrior.” The striking end, or head, of the club serves as the sculptural focus with variations of the human face on both sides. The eyes and nose of the primary face are themselves small human heads. Low-relief carving portrays a small face at the crown and patterns based on tattoo designs below. This type of 'u'u (club) was a favored weapon for close fighting.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Purchase 128:1952

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Landscape from Tahiti, c.1893  
oil on canvas

This lush landscape illustrates the Apaatarao region near Papeete, where Gauguin lived during his first stay in Tahiti. Gauguin emphasized aspects of the island that he found exotic: the tropical foliage in the foreground, verdant green hills with small huts in the middle ground, and looming mountains in the background. He created this painting specifically with the Parisian art market in mind, conspicuously omitting any trace of European colonial presence in the region. This fed into the fantasy of Tahiti as an untouched wilderness.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.117

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Vessel, 1893–95

glazed stoneware

Pot, 1893–95

glazed stoneware

Vessel, 1893–95

glazed stoneware

Gauguin created these three head-shaped pots after returning to Paris from his first trip to Tahiti in 1893. While one of them appears naturalistic, the other two have wide, staring eyes and masklike faces. Unlike his earlier works formed by hand, Gauguin used molds to create these vessels, giving greater uniformity to their shapes. Yet each piece was glazed individually, allowing for subtle variations in the final work.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

2019.154, .156, .155

Unidentified Enata/Enana (Marquesan) artist, Marquesas Islands

Container (ipu ehi),

late 19th–early 20th century

coconut shell

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Morton D. May 85:1977

Unidentified Enata/Enana (Marquesan) artist, Marquesas Islands

Bowl,

late 19th–early 20th century

wood

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Morton D. May 1338:1983

Unidentified Enata/Enana (Marquesan) artist, Marquesas Islands

Lidded Bowl,

late 19th–early 20th century

wood

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Morton D. May 1341:1983a,b

These carved containers feature low-relief surface patterns influenced by traditions-based tattoo designs. The oblong, lidded bowl combines a European- based form with Marquesan-inspired tiki (human figure) on the lid's handle.

These vessels are made of coconut shell or woods lighter in weight and color than the dense, dark woods of the older Marquesan war club and stilt step in this gallery. Marquesan artists created these items for a new market comprised primarily of foreigners. Between the 1880s and 1930s, the number of foreign-owned trading posts on the Marquesas Islands expanded, and regular freight and cargo services were established to link the Marquesas with Tahiti and San Francisco. These resources spurred the creation of new carved objects such as these examples.

Gauguin collected similar bowls and containers, which appear in his still-life paintings. Their patterns encouraged his own interest in pattern making in paintings and sculptures.

## Gallery 246: Gauguin and Maori Art

Unidentified Maori artist, Aotearoa (New Zealand)  
Male Figure, early 19th century wood

In Maori art, most human figures, or tiki, represent ancestors. The heavily eroded surface of this figure suggests it was placed outside for an extended time, possibly attached to a roof peak. Note the two fingers on each hand. Hands with one to five fingers, and up to seven, are commonly seen in Maori art. The choice of number seems to be a stylistic decision guided by regional preferences and symbolic considerations.

Gauguin's awareness of such imagery impacted his subject matter as seen in the painting alongside, *Reclining Tahitian Women*, which features a tiki figure.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Morton D. May  
1489:1983

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Reclining Tahitian Women or The Amusement of the Evil Spirit (Arearea no varua ino), 1894

oil on canvas

Gauguin's Tahitian title at bottom left emphasizes the malevolent spirit, embodied by the statue above, whose presence seems to torment the two Tahitian women in the foreground. They sit on a beach, one with head in hand.

In the distance, two figures dance with abandon while a hovering blue mask further suggests the presence of the spirit world. The picture was painted in Brittany as a memory of Tahiti, and Gauguin dedicated it to his landlady at Pont-Aven, Madame Marie-Jeanne Gloanec. The work is notable for its areas of flat patterns, particularly in the abstract, violet shadows in the foreground.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.118

Unidentified Maori artist, Aotearoa (New Zealand)  
Treasure Box (wakahuia), early 19th century  
wood, shell, and greenstone

Lavishly carved, the rich and fluid relief sculpture adorning this lidded box reveals male and female ancestral figures. On the base, shown to the right of the lid, two male figures flank a female figure at center. Their heads extend from either end of the container to form knobs, which allowed it to hang from the rafters of a Maori home. Household residents typically viewed the boxes from below.

Created primarily to hold the white-tipped black feathers of the now-extinct huia bird, these boxes also stored personal adornments made of materials such as wood, bone, greenstone, and whale ivory. Although a container for taonga (treasures), a wakahuia was itself a cherished object.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Morton D. May  
203:1975a,b

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Flowers and Cats, 1899

oil on canvas

Gauguin loved flowers and often painted still lifes of them. Here he represented a mix of colorful gladioli, irises, and dahlias. At his request, the seeds of these flowers were sent to him from France, and he cultivated them in Tahiti. The stillness of the floral arrangement is complemented by two resting cats that probably belonged to Gauguin. The sphinx-like feline at right looks directly at the viewer with almond-shaped green eyes.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.121

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Landscape with a Horse, 1899

oil on burlap

This image of a Tahitian landscape, populated only by a horse and some huts in the center, highlights Gauguin's innovative nature as a painter of the late 19th century. His time in Tahiti afforded him the opportunity to explore the use of vivid colors in his works, as seen with the contrasts of rich greens, vibrant pinks, and deep blues in this painting. Gauguin also used burlap rather than the more traditional canvas support, allowing the texture to show through the painted surface to emphasize its unrefined appearance.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Sydney M. Shoenberg Sr.  
27:1974

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Landscape from Tahiti with Nine Figures (Fa'a ara), 1898  
oil on canvas

This painting illustrates Gauguin's continued interest in depicting everyday life in Tahiti. In the foreground, a group of figures seems to dance on the deep red earth. Behind them, a man on horseback and a seated figure mark the boundary of a more somber landscape in the background. This work also highlights the imaginative nature of Gauguin's art. He described the odd form in the foreground as "a strange, grey-brown mark representing a clump of undergrowth or a coiled dragon or...anything our imagination cares to suggest."

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.120

Hone Taahu, Maori, c.1825–1900

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

House Wall Panels (poupou), c.1870

wood and haliotis shell

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Morton D. May

88:1977.1,.2

These carved panels, or poupou, were part of a group of 46 that were created to form the framework of a large Maori meeting house, which ultimately was never constructed. Supporting the rafters, these solid panels would alternate with lattice openwork panels. Meeting houses, or wharenuī, are considered to be the property of the local community and function as a space to hold important gatherings, such as weddings and tangihanga, or death ceremonies.

Hone Taahu, the master carver who created these panels, is known for combining both square and serpentine figures. Taahu's carvings often include action and movement, visible in one panel with the placement of the hands through the mouths. Taahu is also credited for depicting great variation in the stylistic treatment of tongues. Extending one's tongue is an expression of a Maori warrior's readiness to fight.

Unidentified Maori artist,  
Aotearoa (New Zealand)  
Model War Canoe (waka taua), 19th–20th century  
wood, haliotis shell, feathers, and fiber

This intricately carved model of a waka taua (war canoe) demonstrates the elegance of Maori ocean vessels. Maori communities presented small scale models of canoes as gifts to important visitors to Aotearoa during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Capable of carrying up to 100 warriors using paddles or sails, full-scale war canoes were the largest and most important of the various watercraft built by the Maori. The bow, stern, and strakes were carved separately and bound together to form a sleek, efficient sea-going vessel. When not in use, a waka taua was unlashd and dismantled, the carved components removed, and the hull protected from the elements in a special structure built near the water's edge.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Morton D. May 87:1977

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903  
Mysterious Water (Pape Moe), 1894  
oak wood and paint

Gauguin represents a figure leaning over to drink at a waterfall, created with long vertical incisions into the wood. The title of the work suggests a particular power of this water. The enigmatic atmosphere is heightened by the presence, at top right, of a strange grinning spirit. Gauguin made this sculpture in Brittany, piecing together oak door panels, which he then carved and painted.

His image was based on a photograph he probably owned (see image). Gauguin was always an avid collector of photographs that he used as source material.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2019.165

Unidentified Maori artist, Aotearoa (New Zealand)  
War Canoe Sternpost (taurapa), probably early to  
mid-19th century wood

When carving war canoe taurapa (sternposts) such as this, Maori artists adhered to a standard composition. A manaia, a beaked figure in profile representing a guardian spirit, appears near the top holding two ribs cascading downward. A second manaia is visible in profile on the base, directly below the place where the ribs end. A small human figure rests against the inner base of the sternpost that would have faced the canoe. Alternating openwork spirals and small manaia figures fill the intervening space. When the canoe was not in use, the sternpost and other decorative elements were removed and stored. These elaborately carved pieces were frequently sold to collectors.

Gauguin copied a sternpost very similar to this one during his visit to the Auckland Institute and Museum in New Zealand in 1895 (see image). He specifically focused on the human figure at the bottom of the sternpost.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Morton D. May  
1531:1983

Unidentified Maori artist, Aotearoa (New Zealand)  
Figurehead (pakoko) From a Fishing Canoe, 18th to early  
19th century  
wood

Appearing defiant with a thick protruding tongue, this tiki head was attached to the bow of a waka tete, or fishing canoe. Its aggressive face would have pointed outward, parting the sea with its powerful force. The curved and spiral patterns around the mouth likely represent moko, intricate tattoos that communicate personal history as well as tribal status. The eyes of the head were once inlaid with iridescent shells.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Morton D. May  
1558:1983

Unidentified Maori artist, Aotearoa (New Zealand)  
Club (taiaha), 18th–19th century  
wood

The carved end of this staff represents a tongue extending from an open mouth. Below it sits a pair of eyes, which originally would have been inlaid with iridescent haliotis shell. Extending one's tongue is an expression of a Maori warrior's readiness to fight. Taiaha such as this one are a quarterstaff, or two-handed club, used in battle and as a chief's symbol of authority.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joe L.  
Kinker 445:2002

Unidentified Samoan artist, Samoa  
Tapa Cloth (siapo), c.1900–1920  
bark cloth and pigment

Decorating this cloth are geometric designs based on small lines and netting as well as natural forms, such as the trochus shell and starfish. Women artists processed the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) and created the patterns by rubbing ochre over rectangular tablets carved with designs in relief. Cloths such as these serve utilitarian and ceremonial purposes.

Although tapa is the Polynesian word by which foreigners refer to bark cloth from the region, finished bark cloth in the Samoan language is siapo. Gauguin owned a tapa cloth (see image) very similar in pattern to this one that covered a table in his Parisian studio, which he called the “Studio of the South.”

Saint Louis Art Museum, Museum Shop Fund 167:1982

## Gallery 247: Gauguin and Religion

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Te Atua (The Gods), 1899

woodcut

Te Atua incorporates religious imagery from Polynesian, Christian, and Asian beliefs. Situating the scene in front of a Polynesian-style dwelling, Gauguin illustrated a supplicating figure with a masklike face, bowing before the haloed Mary and Jesus at the left. On the right, a standing figure makes a gesture of fearlessness common in Buddhist and Hindu religions. The face of the bowing figure appears again as the Polynesian creator god, Ta'aroa, seen under the white arch at the top. This blending of spiritual imagery emphasizes Gauguin's interest in comparative religions.

Mildred Lane Kemper Museum, Washington University in Saint Louis, University purchase, Charles H. Yalem Art Fund, 2001. 2019.170

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

la Orana Maria (Je vous salue, Marie) (Hail Mary [I Salute You, Mary]), 1893–95

lithograph in blue ink

Gauguin transformed a Catholic subject, Mary and Jesus, into an image of a Tahitian woman holding a child on her shoulder. He incorporates traditional Christian motifs, like the white halos above their heads, while also emphasizing the Polynesian features of his models, including the woman's floral dress. Gauguin made this print in Paris following his return from Tahiti in 1893. It illustrates his interest in syncretism—a blending of spiritual beliefs from different religions.

Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University in Saint Louis, University purchase, 1966.  
2019.169

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

published by Christian Cato, Copenhagen printed by Pola Gauguin

Three People, a Mask, a Fox and a Bird, headpiece for *Le Sourire (The Smile)*, 1899, printed in 1921 woodcut on China paper

This print, made from one of Gauguin's last designs, depicts motifs from his other Tahitian works, such as a reclining woman in a pareu or wraparound skirt, masklike faces, and stylized animal figures. It appeared on the title page of his self-published newspaper, *Le Sourire (The Smile)*. The paper was billed as a "serious journal" devoted to discussions of the political climate in Tahiti at the turn of the 19th century. In his articles, Gauguin raged against the French colonial administration on the island, attacking them for their corruption and suppression of the native culture and religion.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope  
283:1940

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

published by Christian Cato, Copenhagen printed by Pola  
Gauguin

Manao tupapau (The Spirit of the Dead Watches), from the series  
Noa Noa, 1894, published 1921 woodcut on China paper

This print illustrates a woman—possibly Teha’amana— curled up in bed, her clenched fist pressed against her face as though stifling a scream while an ominous spirit appears in the background. Gauguin claimed that he witnessed this scene when he found young Teha’amana (see image) in their bed, petrified that a tupapau (spirit) was nearby. The dark imagery in the print emphasizes the presence of death, embodied by the tupapau. In contrast, the young woman is shown in the fetal position, encircled in a halo of light that suggests an egg or placenta, symbolizing birth. This work was printed after Gauguin’s death.

According to Gauguin’s account, Teha’amana was 13 years old when he met her in 1891. She lived with him until he returned to France in 1893; however she did not resume living with him when he returned to Tahiti in 1895. Teha’amana was pregnant by August 1892, but there is no further record of their child.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope 284:1940

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

published by the artist printed by Louis Roy

The Creation of the Universe (L'univers est créé), from  
the series Noa Noa, 1894

color woodcut

Gauguin's complex and enigmatic image represents the Polynesian myth of the creation. To the right is the masklike face of the creator god Ta'aroa. To the left are stylized waves on a turbulent sea. At the bottom center a human figure strides toward other reclining figures in the newly created earthly realm. Within this dreamlike image, in which spiritual and material worlds converge, a strange bright red fish with a ginkgo-leaf tongue hovers in the foreground. The forms display Gauguin's characteristic rough cutting of the wood block, which was printed in color, under his direct guidance, in black ink over an orange base.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope  
281:1940

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

published by Christian Cato, Copenhagen printed by Pola Gauguin

The Creation of the Universe (L'univers est créé), from the series Noa Noa, 1894, printed in 1921 woodcut on China paper

This black-and-white version of The Creation of the Universe (also on view nearby in color) was made years after Gauguin's death by his son, Pola, his youngest child with Mette. Pola acquired 10 of his father's woodblocks and oversaw their printing in Copenhagen. In this image, he made careful efforts to show every incised detail from the block, giving a precise record of the elder Gauguin's original markings. Many of these details are not evident in Gauguin's earlier impressions, where the effect is more abstract and simplified.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope  
285:1940

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

published by Christian Cato, Copenhagen printed by Pola Gauguin  
Nave Nave Fenua (Delicious Earth),

from the series Noa Noa, 1894, printed 1921

woodcut on China paper

This scene highlights Gauguin's ingenuity as a printmaker, as well as his innovative compositional style. The forms are reduced to simplified silhouettes against the background. The contrast of trees and foliage against the white sky at the top resembles an abstract pattern rather than a realistic landscape. A band of Marquesan symbols runs along the left border of the image, enhancing the decorative quality of the print. This black-and-white impression was printed after Gauguin's death by his and Mette's youngest son, Pola, in 1921.

The young woman depicted in this print may be Teha'amana. According to Gauguin's account Teha'amana was 13 years old when he met her in 1891. She lived with him until he returned to France in 1893; however she did not resume living with Gauguin returned to Tahiti in 1895. Teha'amana was pregnant by August 1892, but there is no further record of a child.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope 286:1940

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903 printed by Louis Roy  
Nave Nave Fenua (Delicious Earth), from the series Noa  
Noa, 1894  
color woodcut

Gauguin represents a young Tahitian woman—possibly Teha’amana—in a lush tropical landscape. To her right, a mysterious winged lizard flies directly towards her. Gauguin reimagines the biblical narrative of Eve in the Garden of Eden, translating it into this Polynesian setting of twisting red flowers and trees silhouetted against the bright yellow sky. The lizard replaces the snake from the original story, as snakes are not native to Tahiti. This work was intentionally printed out of alignment, enhancing the dreamlike atmosphere of the image.

Teha’amana lived with Gauguin after they met in 1891 and until he returned to France in 1893. However, they did not continue their relationship when Gauguin returned to Tahiti in 1895. She was pregnant during their time together, although no records of a child exist.

Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope  
282:1940

Paul Gauguin French, 1848–1903

Modern Thought and Catholicism (L'Esprit Moderne et le Catholicisme), 1902

manuscript with two woodcuts and two transfer drawings on the cover

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Vincent L. Price Jr., in memory of his parents, Marguerite and Vincent L. Price 287:1948

Gauguin wrote this 91-page manuscript while living in the Marquesas Islands during the final year of his life. It represents the culmination of his thinking on the importance of religion and spirituality. The artist discussed the similarities between global religions, the mysteries of creation, the place of humankind on earth, and the origins of the soul. He also offered a critique of the social institutions of the Catholic Church and of marriage.

By 1947, this manuscript made its way into the collection of American horror film actor Vincent Price. A native St. Louisan, Price gifted the manuscript to the Museum in honor of his parents. He later recalled that he bought it “because it was a rare statement by a rare and controversial artist.”

To learn more about the manuscript, explore the adjacent digital interactive, which includes scholarly commentary and high-resolution images.