



Corner of a Chapel (Coin de chapelle)
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Breton Woman in an Orchard
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Avenue in Brittany with Figures
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Breton Woman with a Parasol
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888

Works Collected by Theo and Vincent van Gogh

Breton Watercolours

Emile Bernard

Vincent van Gogh's (1853–1890) letter of 15 July 1888 to Emile Bernard (1868–1941) contained an urgent request to send sketches of the paintings he had made in Brittany. Van Gogh had just sent Bernard six drawings of his recent paintings, and hoped to receive in return an impression of what his friend was working on. ⁰¹ His request was granted only in part. On 29 July, Van Gogh received ten drawings that Bernard had sent from Saint-Briac-sur-Mer, where he was staying at the time. Among these ten sheets were four drawings that display Breton settings. These four drawings were unrelated to any of Bernard's painted work, however, so Van Gogh still did not know what Bernard was painting in Saint-Briac-sur-Mer. This was also the case with the rest of the batch. Five of the other sheets depicted brothel scenes, as did many of the drawings that Bernard had sent Van Gogh earlier that year. Prostitution was, after all, a subject that Bernard was fond of discussing with Van Gogh. ⁰² The tenth drawing of the shipment depicted a biblical theme. ⁰³

Unrelated to painted work

In addition to being unrelated to specific paintings, the four Breton watercolours were also not specifically connected with his present surroundings, since they all referred to Pont-Aven and not to Saint-Briac. *Avenue in Brittany with Figures* bears the inscription 'Pont-Aven', and in all four drawings the women wear their headdresses (coiffes) in the manner traditional there, with two large loops behind the head, as seen in many works painted in Pont-Aven by Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), Bernard and others. Bernard made the drawings from memory, having spent long periods in Pont-Aven in 1886 and 1887. Several weeks after sending them to Van Gogh, Bernard once again made his way to the artists' village.

One reason Bernard hesitated to send Van Gogh drawings after his paintings might be his own dissatisfaction with his painted work. His aim in going to Saint-Briac-sur-Mer, where he arrived on 25 April 1888, was to work on an ambitious group composition depicting a village procession. To this end, he was contemplating an extensive series of studies from life.⁰⁴ The failure of this project to materialize eventually sent Bernard into a brief artistic crisis.⁰⁵ He found a way out of it by abandoning his intention to paint from life and turning instead to religious subjects and to painting from memory and the imagination. This shift in focus led him to make large-scale biblical decorations on the walls of his studio, for example, and these four Breton drawings from memory.⁰⁶

Breton pastoral

Admittedly, Bernard had drawn brothel scenes from memory earlier that year, but apparently he had not yet tried this approach with his Breton work. The drawings he sent to Van Gogh form an idealistic tetraptych of the reputedly 'primitive' existence of women in Pont-Aven; indeed, there are no men in these depictions. The drawings comply with the stereotypical, primitivist image of a society untouched by modernity, a life that urban artists like Bernard expected of this region of Brittany. This makes these sheets telling counterparts of the more vulgar and facetious brothel drawings that Bernard had sent to Van Gogh. He thus complemented his fascination for the outgrowths of modernity with pastoral fantasies of unspoiled rural life: a juxtaposition – typical of the nineteenth century – of the secular, sinful city and the religious, chaste countryside.

The drawings depict fruit-pickers, an avenue flanked by plane trees with a strolling couple and other figures, a woman sitting in a field with a view of Pont-Aven, and a woman seated on a bench in the corner of a chapel. In essence, these drawings are harbingers of the important paintings Bernard would make in Pont-Aven, including *The Pardon* (fig. 1) and *The Harvest* (fig. 2). There Bernard also continued to make watercolours, dozens of which are in the same style as the four sheets he sent to Van Gogh.⁰⁷ So even though these drawings were not related to any paintings, they did give some indication of the direction Bernard's work was taking.



Emile Bernard, *The Pardon*,
1888, oil on canvas, 70.3 × 92
cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
Photo: © Musée d'Orsay, Dist.
RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice
Schmidt

Style and technique

As in the abovementioned paintings, Bernard built up the compositions of his drawings from flat areas of colour and clearly accentuated lines, a style that is variously called cloisonnism or synthetism. He was inspired in this endeavour not only by Japanese prints but also by stained-glass windows and the popular Épinal prints (*images d'Épinal*).⁰⁸ Bernard laid in the general form of these compositions with thin lines of black ink, with the exception of *Corner of a Chapel (Coin de chapelle)*, for which he used purple ink. He then coloured in the areas with watercolour. Bernard needed only a small range of colours, because he could achieve nuances of tone by working in layers and applying hatching. Finally, he accentuated the contours with a reed pen, which made it possible to vary the thickness of the lines by adjusting the sharpness of the tip.⁰⁹ The lines of these drawings therefore vary greatly in thickness. In some passages Bernard skipped the first step: instead of laying in the lines with pen and ink, he drew the composition directly in watercolour, afterwards framing his areas of colour with black ink – a method that is discernible in the background of *Breton Woman with a Parasol*, for example. This procedure is quite error-prone, however: here the result testifies to Bernard's great mastery of the medium. The drawings are on sheets of wove paper that came from a sketchbook (measuring around 31 × 20 cm) of the kind Bernard had been using since 1886.¹⁰ Each sheet clearly displays a long edge that was obviously torn from a sketchbook. *Corner of a Chapel* and *Avenue in Brittany with Figures* have drawing-pin holes in the corners, many of which are ripped.¹¹

Van Gogh's reaction to the drawings

Van Gogh is probably not the one who hung these sheets up with drawing pins, because almost immediately after receiving them, he sent the drawings on to his brother Theo van Gogh (1857–1891) in Paris.¹² He also wrote to Bernard by return post: 'A thousand thanks for sending your drawings; I very much like the avenue of plane trees beside the sea, with two women chatting in the foreground and the promenaders. Also the woman under the apple tree, the woman with the parasol.'¹³ Yet several months later he again asked Bernard for depictions of his surroundings, and this time wanted something more substantial. He had received enough rapidly executed sketches.¹⁴ To be sure, in terms of finish, Bernard's watercolours were nowhere near as elaborate as the detailed pen drawings that Van Gogh had sent him.¹⁵ Nor did Bernard's Breton drawings prompt long discussions of any substance in their correspondence, as his brothel scenes did.

It is striking that Van Gogh's reaction to Bernard's Breton drawings did not include any mention of *Corner of a Chapel*. As the only work of the four with religious connotations, it places the profession of faith at the heart of Bernard's image of the 'pure' life in Pont-Aven. Although the drawing has the allure of an everyday scene, the inclusion of a medieval crucifix seems to suggest that the 'primitive' religious culture of the Middle Ages was still very much alive in Brittany. Moreover, the drawing evokes associations with a poem of the same title that Bernard had sent to Van Gogh several months earlier.¹⁶ Van Gogh was certainly not uncritical when it came to the religious turn Bernard had taken in his choice of subject matter.¹⁷ It may well explain why he made no mention of the drawing.

Les Bretonneries

The four Breton drawings that Bernard sent to Van Gogh in the summer of 1888 are difficult to see separately from *Les Bretonneries*, a series of prints he made later, in the first months of 1889 (fig. 3) . At this time he was in Paris again, and at Theo van Gogh's urging, he and Gauguin each made a series of zincographs, with a view to raising the visibility of their art among a wider public. A possible impetus was the exhibition *Les Peintres-Graveurs*, which ran from 23 January to 14 February 1889 at the Durand-Ruel gallery.¹⁸ Whereas Gauguin chose to offer an overview of his oeuvre by presenting interpretations of a number of paintings, Bernard fell back to some extent on what he had made the previous summer: a homogeneous, idealized series of scenes of daily life in rural Brittany. Just as the four drawings do, these eight prints show Breton women in traditional dress, working the land or doing household chores (fig. 4) . Bernard's prints are more highly stylized than the drawings and also exceptionally decorative: the figures are not simply traditionally attired women but rather patterns that combine to form an abstract ensemble. In this way, Bernard reduced the Breton women and their clothing to a generic type and their characteristic caps to a kind of arabesque. Like Gauguin, Bernard exhibited his prints at the Volpini Exhibition, which opened on 10 June 1889.¹⁹

Joost van der Hoeven
March 2023

Citation

Joost van der Hoeven, 'Emile Bernard, Breton Watercolours, 1888', catalogue entry in *Contemporaries of Van Gogh 1: Works Collected by Theo and Vincent*, Joost van der Hoeven (ed.), Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2023.

[↗ doi.org/10.58802/UMSW8627](https://doi.org/10.58802/UMSW8627)

This contribution is licensed under a [↗ CC BY-NC-SA licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).



Object details

Corner of a Chapel (Coin de chapelle)

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

31.2 cm x 20 cm

Inscriptions

Emile Bernard 88

Coin de chapelle

Inventory Number

d0644V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Breton Woman in an Orchard

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

31.2 cm x 19.1 cm

Inscriptions

E.B. 88

Inventory Number

d0645V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Avenue in Brittany with Figures

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

pencil, reed pen and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

30.8 cm x 20.2 cm

Inscriptions

Emile Bernard 88 (Esquisse)

Pont Aven

Inventory Number

d0646V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Breton Woman with a Parasol

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

20.2 cm x 31 cm

Inscriptions

Emile Bernard 88

Inventory Number

d0647V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Provenance

Corner of a Chapel (Coin de chapelle)

Sent by the artist from Saint-Briac to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on 29 July 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, the same day; after his death on 25 January 1891, inherited by his widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, and their son, Vincent Willem van Gogh, Paris; administered until her death on 2 September 1925 by Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Bussum/Amsterdam/Laren; transferred by Vincent Willem van Gogh, Laren, to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam, 10 July 1962 (ratified 28 December 1970); agreement concluded between the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and the State of the Netherlands, in which the preservation and management of the collection, and its placing in the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, to be realized in Amsterdam, is entrusted to the State, 21 July 1962; on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh from the opening of the museum on 2 June 1973, and at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, since 1 July 1994.



Provenance

Breton Woman in an Orchard

Sent by the artist from Saint-Briac to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on 29 July 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, the same day; after his death on 25 January 1891, inherited by his widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, and their son, Vincent Willem van Gogh, Paris; administered until her death on 2 September 1925 by Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Bussum/Amsterdam/Laren; transferred by Vincent Willem van Gogh, Laren, to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam, 10 July 1962 (ratified 28 December 1970); agreement concluded between the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and the State of the Netherlands, in which the preservation and management of the collection, and its placing in the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, to be realized in Amsterdam, is entrusted to the State, 21 July 1962; on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh from the opening of the museum on 2 June 1973, and at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, since 1 July 1994.



Provenance

Avenue in Brittany with Figures

Sent by the artist from Saint-Briac to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on 29 July 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, the same day; after his death on 25 January 1891, inherited by his widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, and their son, Vincent Willem van Gogh, Paris; administered until her death on 2 September 1925 by Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Bussum/Amsterdam/Laren; transferred by Vincent Willem van Gogh, Laren, to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam, 10 July 1962 (ratified 28 December 1970); agreement concluded between the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and the State of the Netherlands, in which the preservation and management of the collection, and its placing in the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, to be realized in Amsterdam, is entrusted to the State, 21 July 1962; on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh from the opening of the museum on 2 June 1973, and at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, since 1 July 1994.



Provenance

Breton Woman with a Parasol

Sent by the artist from Saint-Briac to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on 29 July 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, the same day; after his death on 25 January 1891, inherited by his widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, and their son, Vincent Willem van Gogh, Paris; administered until her death on 2 September 1925 by Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Bussum/Amsterdam/Laren; transferred by Vincent Willem van Gogh, Laren, to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam, 10 July 1962 (ratified 28 December 1970); agreement concluded between the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and the State of the Netherlands, in which the preservation and management of the collection, and its placing in the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, to be realized in Amsterdam, is entrusted to the State, 21 July 1962; on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh from the opening of the museum on 2 June 1973, and at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, since 1 July 1994.



Exhibitions

Corner of a Chapel (Coin de chapelle)

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960

London, Tate Gallery, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven group*, 7 January-13 February 1966, no. 114, *Corner of the Chapel*

Zurich, Kunsthaus Zürich, *Pont-Aven : Gauguin und sein Kreis in der Bretagne*, 5 March-11 April 1966, no. 128, *Coin de Chapelle*



Exhibitions

Breton Woman in an Orchard

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, 12 March-29 May 1960

London, Tate Gallery, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven group*, 7 January-13 February 1966, no. 109, *Breton woman in apple-orchard*

Zurich, Kunsthaus Zürich, *Pont-Aven : Gauguin und sein Kreis in der Bretagne*, 5 March-11 April 1966, no. 124, *Bretonin im Apfelparten*

Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941. A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 12 May-5 August 1990, no. 86, *Breton Woman in an Orchard*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Emile Bernard*, 24 August-4 November 1990, no. 86, *Breton Woman in an Orchard*

Tokyo, Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art, *Vincent van Gogh drawing exhibition. Van Gogh and his time from the Van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum*, 14 September-13 November 2000, no. 53, *Breton woman in an orchard*

Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Academy, *Gauguin's Vision*, 6 July-2 October 2005, *Breton Woman Picking Apples*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Kiezen voor Vincent. Portret van een familiegeschiedenis*, 10 February-10 April 2023



Exhibitions

Avenue in Brittany with Figures

Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism*, 24 January-22 March 1981

Tokyo, Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art, *Vincent van Gogh drawing exhibition. Van Gogh and his time from the Van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum*, 14 September-13 November 2000

Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Academy, *Gauguin's Vision*, 6 July-2 October 2005

New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, *Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's letters to Emile Bernard*, 28 September 2007-6 January 2008

Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, *Paul Gauguin: Paris, 1889*, 4 October 2009-18 January 2010



Exhibitions

Breton Woman with a Parasol

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, 12 March-29 May 1960

London, Tate Gallery, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven group*, 7 January-13 February 1966, no. 110, *Breton woman seated with umbrella*

Zurich, Kunsthaus Zürich, *Pont-Aven : Gauguin und sein Kreis in der Bretagne*, 5 March-11 April 1966, no. 125, *Sitzende Bretonin mit Schirm*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Kiezen voor Vincent. Portret van een familiegeschiedenis*, 10 February-10 April 2023



Literature

Corner of a Chapel (Coin de chapelle)

- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, pp. 99, 106; BVG01241 b-c
- Denys Sutton and Gabriel White, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven Group*, exh. cat., London (Tate Gallery) 1966, no. 113, pp. 33-34; BVG01638
- Mark Roskill, *Van Gogh, Gauguin and French Painting of the 1880s: A Catalogue Raisonné of Key Works*, Ann Arbor 1970, pp. 219-20; BVG02567
- Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism*, exh. cat., Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Toronto 1981, pp. 294-95; BVG04466
- Evert van Uitert and Michael Hoyle (eds.), *The Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam 1987, no. 2.38, p. 372; BVG08057
- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh, Painted with Words: The Letters to Émile Bernard*, exh. cat., New York (The Morgan Library & Museum) 2007, pp. 226, 231, 242, 366; BVG19885
- Marije Vellekoop et al. (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh Drawings*, 4 vols., Amsterdam & Surrey 2007, vol. 4: *Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise, 1888-1890*, p. 147; BVG20528
- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh - The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition*, 6 vols., Amsterdam, The Hague & Brussels 2009, vol. 4: *Arles, 1888-1889*, nos. 649, 650, 651, pp. 196-97, 200, 202; BVG20961 IV

- Lisa Smit and Hans Luijten (eds.), *Choosing Vincent: From Family Collection to Van Gogh Museum*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Bussum 2023, p. 32; BVG26545



Literature

Breton Woman in an Orchard

- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, pp. 99, 106; BVG01241 b-c
- Denys Sutton and Gabriel White, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven Group*, exh. cat., London (Tate Gallery) 1966, no. 109, pp. 33-34; BVG01638
- Mark Roskill, *Van Gogh, Gauguin and French Painting of the 1880s: A Catalogue Raisonné of Key Works*, Ann Arbor 1970, pp. 219-20; BVG02567
- Evert van Uitert and Michael Hoyle (eds.), *The Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam 1987, no. 2.39, p. 372; BVG08057
- Mary Anne Stevens et al. (eds.), *Emile Bernard, 1868-1941: A Pioneer of Modern Art / Ein Wegbereiter der Moderne*, exh. cat., Mannheim (Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Zwolle 1990, pp. 237-38; BVG08880
- Ronald de Leeuw, *The Van Gogh Museum: Paintings and Pastels*, Zwolle 1994, p. 195; BVG14126
- Sjraar van Heugten et al. (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh Drawing Exhibition - Van Gogh and His Time: From the Van Gogh Museum and the H. W. Mesdag Museum*, exh. cat., Tokyo (Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art) 2000, no. 53, pp. 144-45, 190-91; BVG15949
- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh, Painted with Words: The Letters to Émile Bernard*, exh. cat., New York (The Morgan Library & Museum) 2007, pp. 226, 231, 242, 366; BVG19885

- Marije Vellekoop *et al.* (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh Drawings*, 4 vols., Amsterdam & Surrey 2007, vol. 4: *Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise, 1888-1890*, p. 147; BVG20528
- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh - The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition*, 6 vols., Amsterdam, The Hague & Brussels 2009, vol. 4: *Arles, 1888-1889*, nos. 649, 650, 651, pp. 196-97, 200, 202; BVG20961 IV
- Lisa Smit and Hans Luijten (eds.), *Choosing Vincent: From Family Collection to Van Gogh Museum*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Bussum 2023, p. 32, 33; BVG26545



Literature

Avenue in Brittany with Figures

- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, pp. 99, 106; BVG01241 b-c
- Denys Sutton and Gabriel White, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven Group*, exh. cat., London (Tate Gallery) 1966, no. 108, pp. 33-34; BVG01638
- Mark Roskill, *Van Gogh, Gauguin and French Painting of the 1880s: A Catalogue Raisonné of Key Works*, Ann Arbor 1970, pp. 219-20; BVG02567
- Mark Roskill, *Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Impressionist Circle*, London 1970, pp. 103, 126; BVG00546
- Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism*, exh. cat., Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Toronto 1981, pp. 294-95; BVG04466
- Evert van Uiter and Michael Hoyle (eds.), *The Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam 1987, no. 2.36, p. 372; BVG08057
- Ronald de Leeuw, *The Van Gogh Museum: Paintings and Pastels*, Zwolle 1994, p. 195; BVG14126
- Sjraar van Heugten et al.(eds.), *Vincent van Gogh Drawing Exhibition - Van Gogh and His Time: From the Van Gogh Museum and the H.W. Mesdag Museum*, exh. cat., Tokyo (Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art) 2000, no. 54, pp. 146-47, 191; BVG15949
- Douglas W. Druick, Britt Salvesen and Peter Zegers (eds.), *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South*, exh. cat., Chicago (Art Institute of Chicago) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), New York 2001, pp. 180-81; BVG16375

- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh, Painted with Words: The Letters to Émile Bernard*, exh. cat., New York (The Morgan Library & Museum) 2007, pp. 226, 231, 242, 366; BVG19885
- Marije Vellekoop *et al.* (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh Drawings*, 4 vols., Amsterdam & Surrey 2007, vol. 4: *Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise, 1888-1890*, p. 147; BVG20528
- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh - The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition*, 6 vols., Amsterdam, The Hague & Brussels 2009, vol. 4: *Arles, 1888-1889*, nos. 649, 650, 651, pp. 196-97, 200, 202; BVG20961 IV
- Heather Lemonedes, Belinda Thomson and Agnieszka Juszcak, *Paul Gauguin: The Breakthrough into Modernity*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) / Cleveland (Cleveland Museum of Art), Amsterdam 2009, no. 76, pp. 135, 137; BVG20913
- Fred Leeman *et al.*, *Émile Bernard (1868-1941)*, Paris 2013, pp. 118-19; BVG22681
- Lisa Smit and Hans Luijten (eds.), *Choosing Vincent: From Family Collection to Van Gogh Museum*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Bussum 2023, p. 32; BVG26545



Literature

Breton Woman with a Parasol

- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, pp. 99, 106; BVG01241 b-c
- Denys Sutton and Gabriel White, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven Group*, exh. cat., London (Tate Gallery) 1966, no. 110, pp. 33-34; BVG01638
- Mark Roskill, *Van Gogh, Gauguin and French Painting of the 1880s: A Catalogue Raisonné of Key Works*, Ann Arbor 1970, pp. 219-20; BVG02567
- Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism*, exh. cat., Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Toronto 1981, p. 298; BVG04466
- Evert van Uitert and Michael Hoyle (eds.), *The Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam 1987, no. 2.37, p. 372; BVG08057
- Ronald de Leeuw *et al.*, *Vincent van Gogh and Japan*, exh. cat., Kyoto (National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto) / Tokyo (Setagaya Museum of Art), Kyoto 1992, no. 48, pp. 154-55, 184; BVG09925
- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh, Painted with Words: The Letters to Émile Bernard*, exh. cat., New York (The Morgan Library & Museum) 2007, pp. 226, 231, 242, 366; BVG19885
- Marije Vellekoop *et al.* (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh Drawings*, 4 vols., Amsterdam & Surrey 2007, vol. 4: *Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise, 1888-1890*, p. 147; BVG20528
- Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh – The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and*

Annotated Edition, 6 vols., Amsterdam, The Hague & Brussels 2009, vol. 4: *Arles, 1888-1889*, nos. 649, 650, 651, pp. 196-97, 200, 202; BVG20961 IV

- Dorothee Hansen *et al.* (eds.), *Emile Bernard: Am Puls der Moderne*, exh. cat., Bremen (Kunsthalle Bremen), Cologne 2015, p. 21; BVG23348
- Lisa Smit and Hans Luijten (eds.), *Choosing Vincent: From Family Collection to Van Gogh Museum*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Bussum 2023, p. 32; BVG26545



Letters

Corner of a Chapel (Coin de chapelle)

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 649](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 650](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 30 July 1888, [↗ 651](#)



Letters

Breton Woman in an Orchard

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 649](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 650](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 30 July 1888, [↗ 651](#)



Letters

Avenue in Brittany with Figures

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 649](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 650](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 30 July 1888, [↗ 651](#)



Letters

Breton Woman with a Parasol

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 649](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 650](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 30 July 1888, [↗ 651](#)

Figures



Fig. 1

Emile Bernard, *The Pardon*, 1888, oil on canvas, 70.3 × 92 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Photo: © Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice Schmidt



Fig. 2

Emile Bernard, *The Harvest*, 1888, oil on canvas, 56.4 × 45.1 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Photo: (C) RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Jean-Gilles Berizzi



Fig. 3

Emile Bernard, Title page of *Les Bretonneries*, 1889, zincograph coloured in with watercolour, 31.4 × 24.8 cm, Kunsthalle Mannheim. Photo: Kunsthalle Mannheim / Cem Yüçetas



Fig.4

Emile Bernard, *Les Bretonneries: The Reapers*, 1889, zincograph coloured in with watercolour, 24.5 × 30.5 cm, Kunsthalle Mannheim. Photo: Kunsthalle Mannheim / Cem Yüçetas

Footnotes

- 01 Bernard had already sent Van Gogh two drawings from Saint-Briac-sur-Mer, in north Brittany, but those works were brothel scenes, which told Van Gogh nothing about how Bernard was recording the local landscape. Only two of Van Gogh's six drawings have been firmly identified: *Zouave* (1888, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and *Newly Mown Lawn with a Weeping Tree* (1888, private collection). See Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 15 July 1888 [↗ \[641\]](#), n. 1.
- 02 See Emile Bernard's *Brothel Scenes*.
- 03 See *Adoration of the Shepherds*.
- 04 Madeleine Bernard, letter to Emile Bernard, 3 May 1888, in Laure Harscoët-Maire, 'Lettres d'Emile Bernard (1888): De Cancale à Saint-Briac', *Le Pays de Dinan* 17, 1997, p. 164.
- 05 Emile Bernard, letter to his father, Emile Bernard, 4 June 1888, in Harscoët-Maire 1997, p. 172: 'It is really rather troublesome, after all, a large canvas done in conditions such as mine, the models are irregular, pose badly, are not dressed as they should be, and although they testify to their good will, they are not lacking in ill will.' ('C'est bien embêtant tout de même une grande toile faite dans les conditions de la mienne, les modèles sont irréguliers, posent mal, ne sont pas vêtus comme il le faudrait et quoiqu'ils témoignent de leur bonne volonté, ne manquent pas de mauvaise.') See also Emile Bernard, letter to his parents, 16 May 1888, in Harscoët-Maire 1997, p. 168: 'I have started *The Procession*, it's a hell of a job.' ('J'ai commencé *La Procession* c'est un travail de chien.') On Bernard's artistic crisis, see Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 21 June 1888 [↗ \[629\]](#): 'And he [Bernard] asks: "What's the use of working"? But he asks that *while working*; he tells himself that work's of no use whatsoever, *while working* - which is not at all the same thing as saying it while not working.' ('Et il demande: "à quoi bon travailler"? Seulement il demande cela lui *en travaillant*, il se dit que le travail ne sert absolument à rien *en travaillant* - ce qui n'est pas du tout la même chose que de le dire en ne travaillant pas.')
- 06 See Fred Leeman *et al.*, *Émile Bernard (1868-1941)*, Paris 2013, pp. 120-23. As regards the wall decorations, see *Adoration of the Shepherds*.
- 07 Many of these sheets are to be found in the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Japan, and various private collections.
- 08 Leeman *et al.* 2013, p. 69.
- 09 See Emile Bernard's *Brothel Scenes* for a more extensive discussion of Bernard's use of the reed pen.
- 10 See Dorothee Hansen, 'Skizzenbuchblätter aus der Bretagne - Emile Bernards erste Reise zu Fuss 1886', in Dorothee Hansen (ed.), *Emile Bernard: Am Puls der Moderne*, exh. cat., Bremen (Kunsthalle Bremen), Cologne 2015, pp. 26-45.
- 11 With thanks to Nico Lingbeek, paper conservator Van Gogh Museum, 14 October 2021.
- 12 See Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[650\]](#).

- 13 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[649\]](#): 'Mille fois merci de ton envoi de dessins, j'aime beaucoup l'allée de platanes au bord de la mer avec deux femmes causant sur l'avant-plan et des promeneurs. Egalement la femme sous le pommier, la femme à l'ombrelle.'
- 14 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 3 October 1888 [↗ \[696\]](#): 'Well, I'll be very very curious to see studies of Pont-Aven. But for yourself, give me something fairly worked up.' ('Eh bien je serai fort fort curieux de voir des etudes de Pont Aven. Mais pour toi donnes moi une chose un peu travaillée.')
- 15 For a list of drawings by Van Gogh in Bernard's possession, see Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh, Painted with Words: The Letters to Émile Bernard*, exh. cat., New York (The Morgan Library & Museum) 2007, p. 367.
- 16 This poem has not been preserved. See Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 19 April 1888 [↗ \[599\]](#).
- 17 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 26 June 1888 [↗ \[632\]](#). See also [Adoration of the Shepherds](#).
- 18 Leeman *et al.* 2013, p. 152.
- 19 See Caroline Boyle-Turner, *The Prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his Circle in Brittany*, Washington 1986, pp. 48-49, 57-64.