



Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother, 1887

Collected by Theo and Vincent van Gogh

Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother

Emile Bernard

Sophie Albertine Bodin-Lallement (1813–1895), Emile Bernard's maternal grandmother, was very dear to him and was one of his favourite models. Bernard (1868–1941) drew and painted her with great regularity from the very beginning of his artistic career. For instance, he painted her in her parlour during the summer holidays that he spent with her in Lille throughout his adolescence and drew her while she cared for her ailing husband (fig. 1 and fig. 2). When the latter died in 1887, Bernard's grandmother moved in with her daughter in Asnières.⁰¹ Bernard had the opportunity to reunite with her when he returned to his parents' home in late September that year, after spending his second consecutive summer in Brittany.⁰² Soon thereafter, he painted a series of three portraits of his grandmother, the most elaborate version of which is in the Van Gogh Museum. The other likenesses are in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City (fig. 3 and fig. 4). A pen drawing of her portrait is also in the Van Gogh Museum (fig. 5).⁰³



Emile Bernard, *The Artist's Grandmother*, 1887, oil on canvas, 60 × 50.5 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Francis Welch Fund. Photo: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

A close bond

Bernard shared a very close bond with his grandmother. In 1894, in a letter to her, he wrote: 'Without taking away from my mother by blood what is due to her, I can love you according to what you have always done for me: as a true mother.'⁰⁴ She supported him in all his artistic activities and seemed to be the only one in the family to truly comprehend his avant-garde experiments, leading Bernard to regard himself and his grandmother as 'the two pariahs of the house' ('les deux parias de la maison').⁰⁵ However, it is important to note some nuances in his perception. In later writings, Bernard attributed all the familial support he received to his grandmother, while portraying his parents as sceptical of his artistic pursuits. Yet, in examining letters from the period, it becomes evident that his parents did indeed provide him with both financial and moral support.⁰⁶

In this particular portrait, Bernard depicted his grandmother from her left side. Her head is turned towards the viewer as she gazes out somewhat imperiously with one eye. She is dressed in mourning clothes, reflecting the recent loss of her husband. Bernard positioned her in front of a dark red curtain with a grey-blue floral motif. The partially opened curtain provides a glimpse of a dark brown space behind it, suggesting the wooden studio Bernard had at his disposal from the autumn of 1887: his parents had it constructed in their garden while he was travelling in Brittany.⁰⁷ Incidentally, this dark colour between the curtains is a later addition. The X-radiograph shows that the pattern in the curtain originally continued into the background.⁰⁸ To the right of Bernard's grandmother is a large hatbox, and behind it a pillow or quilt.

Painting technique

Bernard first outlined his grandmother in blue paint, then used a large brush to apply her skin tone, as well as her grey hair and widow's weeds. He subsequently delineated her facial features with black paint, after which he covered her entire face with narrow parallel and vertical brushstrokes. To enhance the solidity of the contours, he added another thick black outline along the head, neck and clothing. Bernard painted the background and the attributes on the right of the composition around his grandmother, presumably later in the process.⁰⁹ Of particular note is the white pillow or quilt, which he applied in vertical brushstrokes with lots of impasto.¹⁰ The powerful contrast with the black of the clothes – which is in fact a mixture of several pigments – infuses dynamism into the composition's otherwise sombre palette.¹¹ Moreover, the upper half of the canvas features a busy decorative floral motif on the curtain, which forms an effective foil to the plain geometric shapes dominating the lower half.

Cloisonnism

Bernard's technique served a painting style that aimed to simplify motifs to their most essential form. In rendering his grandmother and the objects around her, he employed crisp and clear lines along with parallel brushstrokes, resulting in a stylized representation. Bernard referred to these works as his *synthèses géométriques* (geometric syntheses), but the style is better known as cloisonnism.¹² By his own account, Bernard developed this style together with Louis Anquetin (1861–1932) in early 1887, following their rejection of neo-impressionism.¹³ Until this rejection, Bernard had extensively experimented in painting with small dots. However, after visiting the studio of the neo-impressionist *par excellence* Paul Signac (1863–1935), he concluded that 'the mechanical work of pointillism seems to me to be the opposite of any true temperament'.¹⁴ Furthermore, Bernard found the figures in that style to be stiff and rigid, as though 'made of wood'.¹⁵

Instead of breaking down colours into short strokes and dots, Bernard and Anquetin pursued a *théorie contraire* (contrary theory) in which they focused on lines and planes of uniform colour.¹⁶ They drew inspiration from various sources, including medieval tapestries, stained glass and Japanese prints.¹⁷ In Bernard's words, 'The study of Japanese crépons [woodblock prints] led us towards simplicity; we created cloisonnism.'¹⁸ In early 1887, Bernard and Anquetin attended a sales exhibition of Vincent van Gogh's (1853–1890) vast collection of Japanese prints at the Paris café Le Tambourin. Van Gogh, already a friend of both artists, had organized the show. Although a financial failure, according to Van Gogh, it had 'quite an influence on Anquetin and Bernard'.¹⁹

Japanese prints and Cézanne

In the *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother*, the impact of Japanese woodblock prints is evident in several aspects, including the use of strongly defined outlines and areas of even colour to depict the clothing and cushion. Moreover, the lack of depth in the composition is also characteristic of Japanese prints. Later, Bernard described the contrast between black and white, which plays a prominent role in the portrait of his grandmother, as a pictorial device that both he and Van Gogh employed in emulation of Japanese prints.²⁰

Aside from Japanese prints, in early 1887 Bernard became fascinated by the work of Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), which he was able to see in the shop of Julien 'Père' Tanguy (1825–1894) in Paris. The latter not only sold painting supplies but also dealt in the work of some avant-garde artists, including Bernard himself.²¹ For Bernard, Cézanne served as an example to 'perfect' his cloisonnism.²² Bernard combined parallel hatched paint strokes borrowed from Cézanne with his own characteristic contour lines and flat planes, to arrive at what he called his 'perfected cloisonnism'. In the *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother*, this 'Cézannesque' facture is particularly visible in the depiction of the face and cushion.

Toward the essence

Both Japanese art and the work of Cézanne provided Bernard with a model for simplifying his motifs. He believed that this simplification allowed him to distil the true essence from reality. On this, he wrote the following: 'Anything that overloads a spectacle covers it in reality and occupies our eyes to the detriment of our minds. You have to simplify the spectacle to draw out its meaning. You have to take a schematic approach, as it were.'²³ Bernard actively rejected a style that placed visual perception at its core. What mattered more than 'nature' was 'the invisible meaning hidden beneath the mute form of exterior appearance'.²⁴

In his early attempts at portraiture, he struggled to capture the essence of his subjects. In the summer of 1887, while in Brittany, he expressed his frustration to his parents, writing, 'My portraits are turning into fairground wax figures, you can't imagine.'²⁵ Although it is unknown to which portraits Bernard was referring, his words suggest that he found his fledgling results lacking vitality, a criticism he had previously directed towards Signac's pointillism. However, the *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother* demonstrates a significant development in his artistic style, in which he employed his abstract painting techniques to create a compelling and lifelike portrayal. Using just a few lines and areas of colour, he successfully captured his grandmother's vivid likeness and convincingly conveyed her facial expression. Although he overtly applied the cloisonnist style, the simplification of the subject did not compromise her human qualities. With this portrait, Bernard skilfully managed to convey the essence of his grandmother on canvas.

The other versions

The other likenesses that Bernard painted of his grandmother in the autumn of 1887 differ in terms of style from the work in the Van Gogh Museum. The portrait in Boston, for instance, showcases a more fluid brushwork, allowing Bernard to effectively convey the texture of his grandmother's clothing. However, the frontal lighting in this portrait renders her face somewhat monotonous, diminishing its distinctive features. The portrait in Kansas City demonstrates a lower level of ambition: it is smaller in size and appears to be unfinished. Noteworthy is that the likenesses in Boston and Kansas City bear Bernard's signature, whereas the one in the Van Gogh Museum does not. However, the presence of a signature does not necessarily indicate the order in which the works were created. Bernard was known to sign his paintings at a later time, and that seems to have been the case with these two works. ²⁶



Vincent van Gogh, *An Old Woman of Arles*, 1888, oil on canvas, 58 × 42 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Van Gogh and the exchange

During the autumn of 1887, Bernard and Van Gogh collaborated closely on multiple occasions. They would often meet and paint together in Bernard's wooden studio in his parents' garden. It was during these sessions that they worked on their respective portraits of Père Tanguy.²⁷ They engaged in discussions about the development of modern painting and the significance of Japanese prints in that context.²⁸ Van Gogh greatly admired Bernard's likeness of his grandmother. A year later, he wrote to Bernard in highly laudatory terms about a group of works that included the *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother*.²⁹ He exclaimed: 'Have you ever done better, have you ever been more yourself, and someone? Not in my opinion. Profound study of the first thing to come to hand, of the first person to come along, was enough to really create something. Do you know what made me like these 3 or 4 studies so much? That je ne sais quoi of something deliberate, very wise, that je ne sais quoi of something steady and firm and sure of oneself, which they show. You've never been closer to Rembrandt, my dear chap, than then.'³⁰ Recognizing the potency of the *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother*, Van Gogh praised Bernard's ability to transform ordinary objects or individuals in their immediate surroundings into extraordinary works of art, drawing a parallel between Bernard's work and that of Rembrandt. Van Gogh acquired the work from Bernard in exchange for his own *Self-Portrait with Straw Hat* (1887, Detroit Institute of Arts).³¹ In turn, the *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother* may have stimulated Van Gogh to paint the *An Old Woman of Arles* (fig. 6) soon after he arrived in Arles in early 1888.³²

The 'Petit Boulevard'

The *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother* was one of two works Bernard submitted to the exhibition organized by Van Gogh at the Grand Bouillon-Restaurant du Chalet on the boulevard de Clichy in Montmartre.³³ This exhibition took place in November and December 1887 and featured the work of a number of artists from the 'Petit Boulevard'. Van Gogh saw these artists as a new avant-garde, setting themselves apart from the more established 'Grand Boulevard', the impressionists, who were already selling their work for steep prices through established art dealers. In addition to Bernard, the other participating artists were Anquetin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), Arnold Koning (1860–1945) and Van Gogh himself.²⁸ According to Bernard, the representation of works at the exhibition was somewhat imbalanced. Bernard had only two paintings on display, while Van Gogh exhibited 'fifty or a hundred'.³⁵

Among the artists considered part of the 'Petit Boulevard', Van Gogh also included the neo-impressionists Seurat and Signac. However, Bernard disagreed so fundamentally with their approach to painting that he refused to exhibit alongside them.³⁶ He was so deeply convinced of the validity of the cloisonist style that he employed in *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother* that he became intolerant of any other approach. Van Gogh confronted Bernard about his uncompromising stance in a letter: 'If, therefore, you've already considered that Signac and the others who are doing pointillism often make very beautiful things with it - instead of running those things down, one should respect them and speak of them sympathetically, especially when there's a falling out. Otherwise one becomes a narrow sectarian oneself, and the equivalent of those who think nothing of others and believe themselves to be the only righteous ones.'³⁷

Despite Van Gogh's well-intentioned advice, Bernard seems to have remained steadfast in his attitude, which ultimately had an adverse effect on his career. By refusing to exhibit alongside Signac, Bernard missed out on opportunities for exposure and recognition. In contrast, Anquetin was more accommodating and did not shy away from showing with Signac at the fifth exhibition of Les XX in 1888.³⁸ Anquetin's entry caught the attention of the art critic Edouard Dujardin, who wrote a laudatory review in *La revue indépendante*, proclaiming Anquetin as the first practitioner of cloisonism.³⁹ Thus, despite creating progressive paintings such as *Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother*, Bernard missed out on the recognition he doubtless deserved.

Joost van der Hoeven
November 2023

Citation

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 Copy citation



Object details

Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Location

Asnières

Date

1887

Medium

oil on canvas

Dimensions

54 cm x 65 cm

Inventory Number

s0205V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother

Front & Back



Provenance

Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother

Exchanged by the artist, Paris with Vincent van Gogh, Paris, between November 1887 and 19 February 1888; 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; donated by Vincent Willem van Gogh to the (1st) Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Laren, 11 March 1952; transferred by the (1st) Vincent van Gogh Foundation to the Theo van Gogh Foundation, Laren, 28 December 1960; donated by the Theo van Gogh Foundation to the (2nd) Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam, 21 July 1962; 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

Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother

Paris, The Grand Bouillon-Restaurant du Chalet, *Exposition des peintres du Petit Boulevard*, November-December 1887, no. no cat. no.

The Hague, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, *De verzameling van Theo van Gogh. Met uitzondering van de werken van zijn broer Vincent*, 1953, no. 6, *Portret van zijn grootmoeder*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *De verzameling van Theo van Gogh. Met uitzondering van de werken van zijn broer Vincent*, 1953, no. 6, *Portret van zijn grootmoeder*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *De verzameling van Theo van Gogh. Met uitzondering van de werken van zijn broer Vincent*, 31 March-11 May 1953, no. 6, *Portret van zijn grootmoeder*

Antwerp, Zaal Comité voor Artistieke Werking, *Vincent van Gogh*, 7 May-19 June 1955, no. 375, *Portret van zijn grootmoeder*

Mons, Museum voor Schoone Kunsten, *Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Son art et ses amis*, 22 March-5 May 1958, no. 82, *portrait de la grand'mère de l'artiste*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 7, *Portret van de grootmoeder van de schilder*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 7, *Portret van de grootmoeder van de schilder*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 12, *Portrait de la grand-mère de l'artiste*

London, Tate Gallery, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven group*, 7 January-13 February 1966, no. 74, *Portrait of the Artist's Grandmother*

Zurich, Kunsthaus Zürich, *Pont-Aven. Gauguin und sein Kreis in der Bretagne*, 5 March-11 April 1966, no. 88, *Porträt der Großmutter des Künstlers*

Bremen, Kunsthalle Bremen, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941 : peintures, dessins, gravures*, 5 February-2 April 1967, no. 5, *Die Großmutter des Künstlers*

Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts (Lille), *Emile Bernard 1868-1941 : peintures, dessins, gravures*, 12 April-12 June 1967, no. 6, *La grand'mere de l'artiste*

Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism*, 24 January-22 March 1981, no. 95, *Portrait of the Artist's Grandmother*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Van Gogh en zijn Franse vrienden. Het cloisonisme als stijl 1886-1891*, 9 April-14 June 1981, no. 95, *Portrait of the Artist's Grandmother*

Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941. A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 12 May-5 August 1990, no. 52, *Porträt der Großmutter des Künstlers*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Emile Bernard*, 24 August-4 November 1990

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Theo van Gogh 1857-1891. Kunsthandelaar, verzamelaar en broer van Vincent*, 24 June-5 September 1999, no. 165, *Portret van Bernards grootmoeder*

Sapporo, Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, *Vincent & Theo van Gogh*, 5 July-25 August 2002, no. 67, *Portrait of the Artist's Grandmother*

Kōbe, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, *Vincent & Theo van Gogh*, 7 September-4 November 2002, no. 67, *Portrait of the Artist's Grandmother*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *De keuze van Vincent. Van Goghs Musée imaginaire*, 14 February-15 June 2003, no. 86, *Portret van Bernards grootmoeder*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Van Gogh en Rembrandt*, 24
February-28 June 2006

New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, *Painted with Words:
Vincent van Gogh's letters to Emile Bernard*, 28 September
2007-6 January 2008, no. 63, *Portrait of Bernard's
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Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Van Gogh aan het werk*, 1 May
2013-13 January 2014

Copenhagen, Ordrupgaard Museum, *Van Gogh, Gauguin,
Bernard. Dramaet i Arles*, 7 February-22 June 2014, no. 59,
Bernard's Grandmother

Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, *Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), la
peinture en colère*, 16 September 2014-5 January 2015, no. 9,
Ma grand-mère

Bremen, Kunsthalle Bremen, *Emile Bernard - Am Puls der
Moderne*, 7 February-1 June 2015, no. 17, *Porträt der
Großmutter*

Vienna, Kunstforum Wien, *Faszination Japan. Monet-Van Gogh-
Klimt*, 10 October 2018-20 January 2019



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- Günter Busch and Henning Bock, *Emile Bernard, 1868-1941: peintures, dessins, gravures*, exh. cat., Bremen (Kunsthalle Bremen) / Lille (Palais des Beaux-Arts), Lille 1967, no. 6, p. 38

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Letters

Portrait of Bernard's Grandmother

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 15 July 1888, [↗ 640](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 5 August 1888, [↗ 655](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 15 October 1888, [↗ 704](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, c. 19 November 1889, [↗ 820](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Willemien van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, 9 or 10 December 1889, [↗ 827](#)

Figures



Fig. 1

Emile Bernard, *Interior in Lille with the Artist's Grandmother*, c. 1885, oil on canvas, 35.5 × 20.5 cm, private collection



Fig. 2

Emile Bernard, *My Grandfather and my Grandmother*, c. 1885, pen drawing in the album *L'enfance d'un peintre* (p. 11), Kunsthalle Bremen – Der Kunstverein in Bremen



Fig. 3

Emile Bernard, *The Artist's Grandmother*, 1887, oil on canvas, 60 × 50.5 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Francis Welch Fund. Photo: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Fig. 4

Emile Bernard, *The Artist's Grandmother*, 1887, oil on canvas, 55.2 × 44.2 cm, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, purchase: Thomas L. Beckett Fund in memory of Samuel F. Beckett and Ethel K. Beckett, 2017.19. Photo: Nelson-Atkins Media Services, Gabe Hopkins



Fig. 5

Emile Bernard, *Portrait of Sophie Bodin-Lallement*, 1887, pencil and pen and ink on paper, 36.2 × 23 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam



Fig. 6

Vincent van Gogh, *An Old Woman of Arles*, 1888, oil on canvas, 58 × 42 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Footnotes

- 01 Emile Bernard, *L'aventure de ma vie*, unpublished manuscript, c. 1939, Bibliothèque de l'INHA, Paris, BCMN Ms 374, p. 74: 'When I returned to Asnières [...] my grandmother had come from Lille, after the death of her husband, and she lived with us' ('Quand je rentrai à Asnières [...] ma grand'mère était venue de Lille, après la mort de son mari, et elle habitait avec nous').
- 02 Emile Bernard, letter to his parents, 14 September 1887, in Neil McWilliam (ed.), *Émile Bernard: les lettres d'un artiste (1884-1941)*, Dijon 2012, no. 26.
- 03 This work was not in Vincent and Theo van Gogh's collection and is therefore not included in this catalogue.
- 04 Emile Bernard, letter to Sophie Lallement, late March 1894, in McWilliam 2012, no. 133: 'Sans retirer à ma mère par le sang ce qui lui revient je puis t'aimer selon ce que tu as toujours fait pour moi: en vraie mère.'
- 05 Ibid.
- 06 For example, around 1939 Bernard wrote in *L'aventure de ma vie* (p. 74) that it was his grandmother who had a wooden workshop built for him, while an 1887 letter (McWilliam 2012, no. 25) indicates that it was actually his father who did so (see n. 7 below).
- 07 Emile Bernard, letter to his parents, 3 September 1887, McWilliam 2012, no. 25: 'I am very happy that the workshop is completed. Many thanks for the great sacrifices that father is making for me. I do not know if I will one day be lucky enough to justify them but I have faith and am working to that end.' ('Je suis très heureux que l'atelier soit achevé. Bien des remerciements pour les grands sacrifices que père fait pour moi. J'ignore si je serai un jour assez heureux de les justifier mais j'ai foi et je travaille pour.')
- 08 With thanks to René Boitelle, paintings conservator, Van Gogh Museum, 17 July 2023.
- 09 It appears that the background curtain was initially laid out as a pink or pale purple monochromatic surface. A portion of the original coloration is still visible just to the right of her neck, slightly above the edge of the white cushion. It can be argued that despite employing a limited palette, given the structure of the layers, Bernard made a conscious effort to introduce a diverse range of colours, each having its own unique effect, while working with limited resources. During the creative process he experimented with different colour combinations, sometimes leading to areas being painted over and given a new hue. With thanks to René Boitelle, paper conservator, Van Gogh Museum, 17 July 2023.
- 10 In its original state, the painting's surface likely possessed a more pronounced texture, with individual brushstrokes being more evident. However, during the lining process, the overall texture was flattened, resulting in the loss of much of the original texture. The white brushstrokes of the cushion managed to retain more of their texture than other parts of the painting. This may have been due to the white paint being relatively stronger or more resistant to the pressure and heat used during the lining process. With thanks to René Boitelle, paper conservator, Van Gogh Museum, 17 July 2023.

- 11 Regarding the use of black and white, in 1911 Bernard wrote: 'So why should we banish them, these two complementary elements [black and white] that the Japanese have embraced for their harmonies?' ('Pourquoi, en effet, les bannir, ces deux complémentaires [noir et blanc] que les Japonais ont prises pour de leurs harmonies?') See Emile Bernard, *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 23. An important nuance is that the passages in the painting that appear black and white to the eye are, in fact, made from a mixture of different pigments. With thanks to René Boitelle, paper conservator, Van Gogh Museum, 17 July 2023.
- 12 With respect to synthèses géométriques, see Emile Bernard, 'Souvenirs sur Van Gogh', *L'amour de l'art* (December 1924), in Anne Rivière (ed.), *Émile Bernard, propos sur l'art*, 2 vols., Paris 1994, vol. 1, p. 241. The term cloisonism was coined by Edouard Dujardin in the article 'Aux XX et aux indépendants: le cloisonisme', *La revue indépendante*, March 1888, pp. 487–92.
- 13 Emile Bernard, 'Louis Anquetin, artiste peintre', *Mercure de France* (1 November 1932), in Rivière 1994, vol. 1: p. 262: 'After a visit we made together to Signac's, to have a last word on the chromatic research of the optical theorists, we decided to abandon the impressionists in order to give ideas the upper hand over technique' ('Après une visite que nous fîmes ensemble chez Signac, pour avoir le dernier mot sur les recherches chromatiques des théoriciens de l'optique, nous conclûmes d'abandonner les impressionnistes pour faire dominer les idées sur la technique').
- 14 Emile Bernard, 'Le symbolisme pictural, 1886–1936', *Mercure de France* (May 1936), in Rivière 1994, vol. 1, p. 280: 'le travail mécanique du pointillé me semblant à l'opposé de tout véritable tempérament'
- 15 Emile Bernard, 'Des relations entre Emile Bernard et Toulouse-Lautrec', published posthumously in *Art-Documents* (March 1952), in Rivière 1994, vol. 1, p. 318: 'I was looking at big, very bright landscapes, but they weren't very lively; interiors in which all the people seemed to be made of wood' ('J'y regardais de grands paysages très lumineux, mais peu vivants; des intérieurs dont tous les personnages me parurent en bois').
- 16 Bernard c. 1939, pp. 66–67.
- 17 Emile Bernard, 'Mémoire pour l'histoire du symbolisme pictural de 1890', *Maintenant*, no. 3 (1919), in Rivière 1994, vol. 1, p. 201: 'This is how the tapestries, stained-glass windows, images on wood, the Breton calvaries were impregnated by these interpretations drawn directly from myself' ('C'est ainsi que les tapisseries, les vitraux, les images sur bois, les calvaires bretons s'imprégnèrent par ces interprétations tirées directement de moi-même').
- 18 Emile Bernard, 'Notes sur l'école dite de Pont-Aven', *Mercure de France* (December 1903), in Rivière 1994, vol. 1, p. 63: 'L'étude des crépons japonais nous mène vers la simplicité, nous créons le cloisonisme.'
- 19 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 15 July 1888 [↗ \[640\]](#): 'The exhibition of Japanese prints that I had at the Tambourin had quite an influence on Anquetin and Bernard, but it was such a disaster' ('L'exposition de crépons que j'ai eu au Tambourin a influencé Anquetin et Bernard joliment mais cela a été un tel désastre'). For the dating of the exhibition, see [↗ \[640\]](#), n. 5.
- 20 On the use of black and white, in 1911 Bernard wrote: 'So why should we banish them, these two complementary elements [black and white] that the Japanese have embraced for their harmonies?' ('Pourquoi, en effet, les bannir, ces deux complémentaires [noir et blanc] que les Japonais ont prises pour de leurs harmonies?') See Bernard 1911, p. 23.

- 21 Emile Bernard, 'Julien Tanguy, dit le "Père Tanguy"', *Mercur de France* (16 December 1908), in Rivière 1994, p. 166.
- 22 Bernard 1903, in Rivière 1994, vol. 1, p. 63: 'In 1887, we perfected cloisonnism under the influence of Paul Cézanne; we had encountered true painting. Anquetin reverted to the great masters. I remained faithful to Cézanne.' ('En 1887, nous perfectionnons le cloisonnisme sous l'influence de Paul Cézanne; nous avons rencontré la vraie peinture. Anquetin remonta vers les grands maîtres. Je restai fidèle à Cézanne.')
- 23 Bernard 1919, in Rivière 1994, vol. 1, p. 201: 'Tout ce qui surcharge un spectacle le couvre de réalité et occupe nos yeux au détriment de notre esprit. Il faut simplifier le spectacle pour en tirer le sens. Il faut en quelque sorte en faire le schema.'
- 24 Ibid.: 'Here, I manifested myself more, and it was truly myself that I was writing about, whereas in front of nature, it was the invisible meaning hidden beneath the mute form of exterior appearance' ('Ici, je me manifestais davantage, et c'est proprement moi que j'écrivais als que devant la nature c'était le sens invisible caché sous la muette forme de l'extériorité').
- 25 Emile Bernard, letter to his parents, June–July 1887, in Laure Harscoët-Maire, 'Lettres d'Émile Bernard (1887): de Cancale à Saint-Briac', *Le pays de Dinan* 17 (1997), p. 151: 'Mes portraits tournent à la figure de cire des foires, vous n'avez pas idée.'
- 26 Bernard soon lost the Van Gogh Museum portrait because of the exchange with Van Gogh. The other works remained longer in his possession, meaning he could still sign them later, whereas this was not possible in the case of the Van Gogh Museum portrait.
- 27 Bernard 1911, p. 12.
- 28 Ibid., p. 14.
- 29 Van Gogh was talking about two still lifes (probably *The Blue Coffeepot*, 1888, Kunsthalle Bremen, Der Kunstverein in Bremen, and *Stoneware Jar and Apples*, 1887, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) and about two portraits of Bernard's grandmother, the pictures in the Van Gogh Museum and in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See [↗ \[655\]](#), nn. 2, 3.
- 30 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 5 August 1888 [↗ \[655\]](#): 'As tu jamais fait mieux, as tu jamais davantage été *toi* et quelqu'un. Pas à mon avis. l'étude profonde de la première chōse tombant sous la main, de la première personne venue, suffisait pour créer réellement. Sais tu ce qui me faisait tant aimer ces 3 ou 4 études: Le je ne sais quoi de volontaire, de très sage, le je ne sais quoi de fixe et ferme et sûr de soi dont ils faisaient preuve. Jamais tu n'as été plus près de Rembrandt, mon cher, qu'alors.'
- 31 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 15 October 1888 [↗ \[704\]](#): 'Gauguin has my portrait, and Bernard says that he'd like to have one like it, although he already has one of me, which I exchanged with him at the time for the portrait of his grandmother.' ('Gauguin a mon portrait et Bernard dit qu'il aurait le désir d'en avoir un pareil quoiqu'il en aie déjà un de moi que dans le temps je lui ai échangé pour le portrait de sa Grand mère.')
- 32 This comparison is often made in the literature, for instance in Fred Leeman, *Émile Bernard (1868–1941)*, Paris 2013, p. 88.

- 33 Emile Bernard, 'Les peintres originaux: Vincent van Gogh', *L'arte* (9 February 1901): 'In a working-class restaurant on avenue de Clichy, an exhibition [...] where he, Vincent, exhibited fifty or a hundred canvases, landscapes, flowers, portraits, where I exhibited "Ma grand'-mère" and "Les chiffonnières du pont de Clichy"' ('Dans un restaurant populaire de l'avenue de Clichy, une exposition [...] où lui, Vincent, met cinquante ou cent toiles, paysages, fleurs, portraits, où j'expose "Ma grand'-mère" et "Les chiffonnières du pont de Clichy"'). This second painting was *View of the Bridge of Asnières* (1887 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brest). See Joost van der Hoeven, 'Bernard and Asnières: Backdrop for a Stormy Beginning', in Bregje Gerritse and Jacquelyn N. Coutré, *Van Gogh and the Avant-Garde: Along the Seine*, exh. cat., Chicago (Art Institute of Chicago) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Chicago, Amsterdam & New Haven 2023, p. 190, n. 57.
- 34 Bernard 1924, in Rivière 1994, vol. 1, p. 241.
- 35 See n. 33.
- 36 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, c. December 1887 ↗ [575]: 'If you've fallen out with a painter, with Signac, for example, and if as a result you say: if Signac exhibits where I exhibit, I'll withdraw my canvases - and if you run him down, then it seems to me that you're not behaving as well as you could behave' ('Si tu es brouillé avec un peintre, par exemple avec Signac et qu'en conséquence de cela tu dis - si Signac expose là où j'expose je retire mes toiles - et si tu le dénigres, alors il me semble que tu agis pas aussi bien que tu pourrais agir').
- 37 Ibid.: 'Si donc tu as déjà réfléchi que Signac et les autres qui font du pointillé font avec cela assez souvent de très belles choses - Au lieu de dénigrer celles-là il faut surtout en cas de brouille les estimer et en parler avec sympathie. Sans cela on devient sectaire étroit soi-même et l'équivalent de ceux qui n'estiment pour rien les autres et se croient les seuls justes.'
- 38 *Catalogue de la Ve exposition des XX*, Brussels 1888.
- 39 Dujardin 1888, p. 490.