



On the Banks of the River, Martinique, 1887

Works Collected by Theo and Vincent van Gogh

On the Banks of the River, Martinique

Paul Gauguin

In October 1887, towards the end of his stay of over four months in Martinique, Paul Gauguin told his friend Emile Schuffenecker (1851–1934) what he had produced: 'I will bring back a dozen canvases, four of them with figures superior to those of my Pont-Aven period.'⁰¹ *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* is probably one of those four works with figures. After all, of the Martinique series, only *The Mango Trees, Martinique* and *Tropical Conversation* (1887, private collection) display more prominently portrayed figures.⁰² Together with these two works, then, Gauguin considered *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* to be better than what he had produced the previous year in Brittany. Even though it is less ambitious in execution than *The Mango Trees, Martinique* - for example, the canvas is smaller (standard-size 15 figure) and has fewer and less elaborate figures - Gauguin made similar preparations for this work: he based the figures on preparatory studies and took parts of the composition from his other Martinican paintings.

Recycling motifs

Recycling motifs is characteristic of Gauguin's working method.⁰³ He often based his figures on rapid sketches or elaborate preparatory drawings, and, as mentioned earlier, he even borrowed motifs from his previous paintings. In Martinique, he did this frequently, and as a result these works form a coherent network of figures and motifs that recur time and again. For example, Gauguin used a sketch of a squatting woman with her back to the viewer for no fewer than three paintings.⁰⁴



Paul Gauguin, *Study of Martinican Women*, 1887, pencil, black chalk and pastel on paper, 41.5 × 53.2 cm, private collection

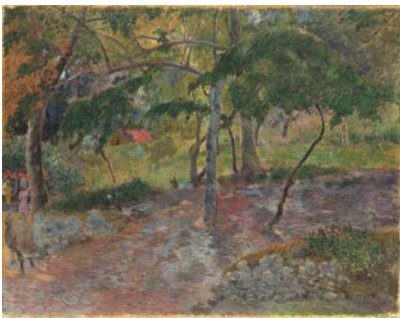
For the sitting woman in *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* Gauguin used two of the three detailed studies from life that he produced in Martinique: *Study of Martinican Women* (fig. 1) for the body and *Study of a Martinican Woman*, for the head and the headdress.⁰⁹ In doing so, Gauguin transferred the head and body to the canvas but reversed the image and reduced it in size.¹⁰ No worked-out preparatory drawing has yet been found for the boy standing opposite her, apart from a rapid exploration of the type, which appears at left on the sheet with the drawing of *Martinican Women* (fig. 2). He occurs a number of times in Gauguin's Martinican paintings. In *Near the Huts* (fig. 3) we see him holding a large sack and leaning against a tree, and in *Tropical Conversation* he stands in the grass with his back to the viewer. He is, moreover, the only male figure in the Martinique series. Remarkably enough, his face is never worked out and he therefore remains anonymous. The cow behind the boy might also be based on a sketch, one that has never been traced but which possibly dates from 1885 (or earlier), since it could have been used for the painting *Cows at the Watering Place* (1885, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam).⁰⁷ Gauguin could also have used this unknown sketch for *Martinican Meadow* (1887, National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo), a scene featuring the same cow, which decorates a fan he designed after his return to Paris.⁰⁸

A well-considered composition

Gauguin presumably also made an exploratory sketch for the broad division of the foreground of the composition. The sheet *Landscape with Trees, Cows and Two Women* (fig. 4) displays the same kind of bumpy riverbed, with a tree trunk in the middle of the composition. We also see in the sketch, at left, a cow with a seated woman, seen from her left side, just as in the painting. Furthermore, the design of the prominently placed tree in *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* corresponds almost exactly to the tree in *Near the Huts* (see fig. 3), albeit the tree in this work is once again depicted in reverse.

A tree trunk placed prominently in the foreground is a compositional device that Gauguin used frequently from 1884 onwards. Trees at the front of a scene generate dynamism in an otherwise systematically laid out landscape. Moreover, they create a sense of depth because they function like the wings of a stage, beyond which the viewer catches sight of the landscape in the background. Gauguin had learned this trick from his teachers Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) and Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), who in turn had taken it from Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints.⁰⁹ Gauguin owned landscapes with trees in the foreground by both painters, and these undoubtedly served as examples.¹⁰ In addition to *On the Banks of the River, Martinique*, many other paintings that Gauguin made in Martinique display one or more trees in the foreground.¹¹

Both the tree and the high, bird's-eye viewpoint of *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* have their origins in *ukiyo-e*. Here, too, however, Pissarro no doubt set the example.¹² At Pissarro's solo exhibition at Paul Durand-Ruel's gallery in 1883, Gauguin had seen the work *Girl with a Stick* (1881, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), depicting a girl sitting in the grass, portrayed from a high viewpoint, which causes the horizon to fall outside the picture.¹³ In *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* the elevated viewpoint has the same effect. It also compresses the perspective, so that there is little sense of depth, despite the tree in the foreground. The landscape is thus a decorative, visual play of the two green riverbanks, with the large purple zone of water in between, on which Gauguin suggests the reflection of the figures. Shortly before his Caribbean campaign, Gauguin had explored the contrast between purple river water and green banks in *Two Women Bathing* (1887, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires). In Martinique he used these contrasting colours not only for *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* but also for the large canvas *Landscape on Martinique* (fig. 5).



Paul Gauguin, *Landscape on Martinique*, 1887, oil on canvas, 90.2 × 116.1 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Munich - Neue Pinakothek, Munich

As he did in *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, Gauguin divided the broad areas of colour into clearly defined horizontal bands. He applied the green of the grass in vertical brushstrokes and laid in the purple-blue of the water in horizontal strokes. In the preliminary underdrawing – which Gauguin made, as usual, with diluted blue paint – he roughly indicated the riverbanks, after which he loosely coloured in the different areas.¹⁴ Compared with the neatly painted *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, the work is less disciplined in character. In various places in the composition, Gauguin left the canvas unpainted, and the blue contours of the underdrawing are also clearly discernible, primarily in the figures but also around the dark green foliage and the stones in the foreground. He probably painted this way in order to use as little of his materials as possible, knowing that if he ran short it would take a long time for new supplies to arrive from Paris. At the same time, this method of working ensured that *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* already inclined stylistically towards synthetism, the style of painting that Gauguin would develop, together with Emile Bernard (1868–1941) and Charles Laval (1862–1894), in the summer of 1888. This style is characterized by the use of contour lines and uniform areas of colour, the deconstruction of perspective and spatial perception, and a preference for decorative brushstrokes. These characteristics are all discernible in *On the Banks of the River, Martinique*, giving it a stylistically innovative appearance.

In conversation

Gauguin situated the figures in the corner of his composition and portrayed them as though they are conversing. He had previously explored the theme of conversation in the large figure painting *Breton Shepherdesses* (1886, Neue Pinakothek, Munich). In Martinique, Gauguin painted the subject twice: in addition to *On the Banks of the River, Martinique*, the painting *Tropical Conversation* shows people conversing – the title of the latter says it all.¹⁵ Here, too, Pissarro may well have set the example, considering that Gauguin owned Pissarro's *Peasant Women Chatting* (c. 1881, private collection, Switzerland).¹⁶ Similar in mood to *Peasant Women*, Gauguin's *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* exudes a relaxed atmosphere, with people casually engaging in conversation. This alluring scene therefore seems like a snapshot of everyday life, with Martinicans as accessory characters.

Even though we know that Gauguin did not paint this picture from life, he could easily have witnessed such a scene by a stream near his abode on Martinique. He had probably found accommodation on a small fruit plantation on the beach of Anse Turin, barely two kilometres south of Saint-Pierre, then the capital of the island.¹⁷ The path to town crossed a shallow stream, which flowed into the small bay at Anse Latouche. The large sugar plantation Habitation Latouche, situated on this bay, used the water from this stream to produce rum.¹⁸ It is likely that Gauguin sat at this crossing to sketch the women passing by with their baskets of fruit, and at the same time he drew inspiration from the sight of the stream: he painted it twice, once in *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* and again in *Landscape on Martinique* (see fig. 5) .¹⁹

However, despite its roots in real-life observations, *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* presents an idealized picture of the life of the Black population of Martinique. Like *The Mango Trees, Martinique*, this painting depicts a pleasant pastoral scene that evokes associations with the work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824–1898). Gauguin thus ignored the actual living conditions of Black Martinicans, who appear peaceful and serene in his compositions. Although a casual conversation occurring on a path was certainly not an impossibility, the picture offers no insight into the hard work, the segregation or the exploitation that took place in Martinique, even after the abolition of slavery in 1848. The picture of a pleasant encounter, in which the characters apparently have all the time in the world to talk, gives rise to certain assumptions about life in Martinique that have a tenuous connection to reality. It perpetuates the clichéd image and pictorial tradition of Caribbean colonies such as Martinique, which invariably present an agreeably slow-paced way of life in a welcoming paradise.²⁰ Standing in front of this picture, European viewers could imagine themselves to be colonial tourists, whose observations of the 'other' sparked 'exotic' fantasies. In presenting these visual staples of Martinique, Gauguin perpetuates the colonialist view of Caribbean island culture. But even so, this work stands out from the nineteenth-century exoticist canon, owing to its avant-garde style.

Traded for two Van Goghs

In December 1887, around a month after Gauguin's return to Paris, he traded *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* for two of Vincent van Gogh's paintings, namely *Sunflowers* (1887, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and *Two Cut Sunflowers* (1887, Kunstmuseum Bern).²¹ The exchange presumably came about during the exhibition organized by Van Gogh, *Peintres du Petit Boulevard*, in the Grand Bouillon-Restaurant du Chalet on the avenue de Clichy. It meant the addition of a second Martinican painting by Gauguin to Theo and Vincent van Gogh's collection,²² after their purchase, at approximately the same time, of *The Mango Trees, Martinique*.²³ Gauguin left *On the Banks of the River, Martinique*, intended for Van Gogh, with his frame-maker Pierre Cluzel, at 33 rue Fontaine-Saint-Georges, near Van Gogh's address in Montmartre. Van Gogh was requested in turn to leave his paintings at the Montmartre branch of Boussod, Valadon et Cie, where Gauguin would collect them, because, as he wrote: 'I am so rarely in your part of town.'²⁴

It is also clear from the letter in which Gauguin proposed this way of effecting the exchange that he had been the one to decide which work Van Gogh would get from him. It is not known if Van Gogh had previously seen the painting, but Gauguin said: 'If it doesn't suit you, let me know and come and choose one yourself.'²⁵ That proved not to be necessary: Van Gogh was satisfied and kept the work. Gauguin, in turn, was impressed with the works he had received from Van Gogh. His dealer Ambroise Vollard described in his memoirs the studio apartment in rue Vercingétorix where Gauguin stayed in the period between his two Tahitian campaigns (1893–95): 'Three Van Goghs hung above his bed: in the middle a landscape in a mauve tonality; to right and left *Sunflowers*.'²⁶ Nevertheless, Gauguin capitalized on the paintings before his departure for Tahiti in 1895 by giving them on consignment to Vollard.²⁷ By contrast, *On the Banks of the River, Martinique* was never resold and remained in the possession of the Van Gogh family.

Joost van der Hoeven
March 2023

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Object details

On the Banks of the River, Martinique

Artist

Paul Gauguin (1848 - 1903)

Location

Martinique

Date

1887

Medium

oil on canvas

Dimensions

54.5 cm x 65.5 cm

Inscriptions

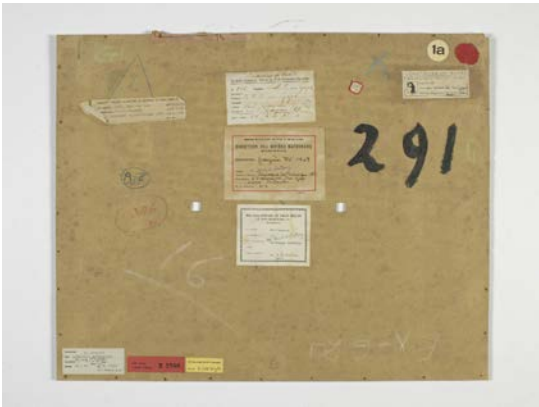
P Gauguin 87

Inventory Number

s0220V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



On the Banks of the River, Martinique

Front & Back



Provenance

On the Banks of the River, Martinique

Exchanged by the artist, Paris with Vincent van Gogh, Paris, December 1887; left by Vincent van Gogh at the apartment of his brother Theo van Gogh, Paris; 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; 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

On the Banks of the River, Martinique

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Moderne Kunst Kring: Oeuvres de peinture, sculpture, dessin, gravure: exposée au Musée Municipal Suasso*, 6 October-7 November 1912, no. 16, *Paysage*

Antwerp, Feestzaal Meir, *L'art contemporain*, 29 April-28 May 1922, no. 274, *Landschap (Martinique) / Paysage (Martinique)*

London, Leicester Galleries, *An exhibition of works by Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)*, July 1924-[unknown], no. 48, *Landscape with figures (Martinique)*

The Hague, Museum Mesdag, *Zonder titel [Presentatie in het museum]*, April-May 1926, *Landschap met negers / Landschap met koe*

Basel, Kunsthalle Basel, *Paul Gauguin 1848-1903*, July-August 1928, no. 31, *Am Weiher*

Berlin, Galerie Thannhauser, *Paul Gauguin: 1848-1903 : Ausstellung in unserem Berliner Haus*, October 1928-[unknown], no. 18, *Am Weiher*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Vincent van Gogh en zijn tijdgenooten*, 6 September-2 November 1930, no. 155, *Aan den vijver (Martinique)*

London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1949

Paris, Orangerie des Tuileries, *_ Gauguin : exposition du Centenaire_*, 1949, no. 4, *Paysage de la Martinique*

Basel, Kunstmuseum Basel, *Ausstellung Paul Gauguin zum 100. Geburtsjahr*, 26 November 1949-29 January 1950, no. 13, *Am Weiher (La Martinique)*

Lausanne, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, *Gauguin: exposition du centenaire*, 16 February-16 April 1950, no. 29, *Paysage de la Martinique*

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. 27b, *Landschap op Martinique*

The Hague, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, *De verzameling van Theo van Gogh : met uitzondering van de werken van zijn broer Vincent*, 11 June-2 August 1953, no. 27b, *Landschap op Martinique*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *De verzameling van Theo van Gogh : met uitzondering van de werken van zijn broer Vincent*, 5 September-15 November 1953, no. 27b, *Landschap op Martinique*

Antwerp, Zaal Comité voor Artistieke Werking, *Vincent van Gogh*, 7 May-19 June 1955, no. 386, *Landschap op Martinique met 2 figuren en drinkende koe*

Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Academy, *Paul Gauguin : paintings, sculpture and engravings*, 30 September-26 October 1955, no. 16, *Martinique Landscape*

London, Tate Gallery, *Paul Gauguin : paintings, sculpture and engravings*, 30 September-26 October 1955, no. 16, *Martinique Landscape*

Palm Beach (Florida), Society of the Four Arts, *Paul Gauguin 1848-1903*, 4 February-4 March 1956, no. 4, *Landscape Martinique*

Coral Gables, Lowe Gallery of the University of Miami, *Paul Gauguin, 1848-1903*, 8-28 March 1956, no. 3, *Landscape Martinique*

New York, Wildenstein & Company, *Loan exhibition, Gauguin: for the benefit of the Citizen's Committee for Children of New York City*, 5 April-5 May 1956, no. 5, *Landscape*

Mons, Museum voor Schoone Kunsten, *Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Son art et ses amis*, 22 March-5 May 1958, no. 88, *paysage de martinique*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, 29 January-29 February 1960, no. 44, *Landschap op Martinique*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, 12 March-29 May 1960, no. 44, *Landschap op Martinique*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 38, *Paysage de Martinique*

Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (Stockholm), *Gauguin i Söderhavet*, 5 March-10 May 1970, no. 3, *Vid flodstranden*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Theo van Gogh 1857-1891. Kunsthandelaar, verzamelaar en broer van Vincent*, 24 June-5 September 1999, no. 164, *Aan de oever van het meer op Martinique*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Theo van Gogh 1857-1891. Marchand de tableaux, collectionneur, frère de Vincent*, 27 September 1999-9 January 2000, no. 164, *Au bord de l'étang*

Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, *Van Gogh and Gauguin. The Studio of the South*, 22 September 2001-13 January 2002, no. 12, *Martinique (At the Pond's Edge)*

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Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *De keuze van Vincent. Van Goghs Musée imaginaire*, 14 February-15 June 2003, no. 141, *Bij het meer, Martinique*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Paul Gauguin. De doorbraak naar moderniteit*, 19 February-6 June 2010, no. 81, *Aan de oever van het meer op Martinique*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Van Gogh aan het werk*, 1 May 2013-13 January 2014, no. 214, *Aan de oever van het meer op Martinique*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Gauguin en Laval op
Martinique*, 5 October 2018-13 January 2019, no. 1, *Aan de
oever van de rivier, Martinique*



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On the Banks of the River, Martinique

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- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 22 May 1888, [↗ 612](#);
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 15 July 1888, [↗ 640](#);
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Willemien van Gogh, Arles, 31 July 1888, [↗ 653](#);
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888, [↗ 697](#);
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 8 October 1888, [↗ 699](#);
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 17 January 1889, [↗ 736](#).

Figures



Fig. 1

Paul Gauguin, *Study of Martinican Women*, 1887, pencil, black chalk and pastel on paper, 41.5 × 53.2 cm, private collection



Fig. 2

Detail of Paul Gauguin, *Martinican Women*, 1887, pencil, black chalk and pastel on paper, 63.5 × 49 cm, private collection



Fig. 3

Paul Gauguin, *Near the Huts*, 1887, oil on canvas, 90 × 55 cm, private collection

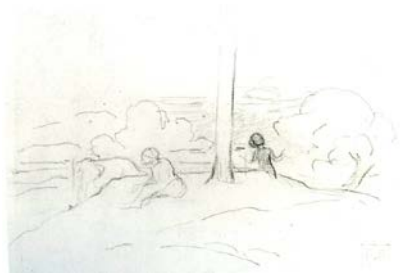


Fig. 4

Paul Gauguin, *Landscape with Trees, Cows and Two Women*, 1887, black chalk on paper, approx. 16 × 11 cm, private collection



Fig. 5

Paul Gauguin, *Landscape on Martinique*, 1887, oil on canvas, 90.2 × 116.1 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Munich - Neue Pinakothek, Munich

Footnotes

- 01 Paul Gauguin, letter to Emile Schuffenecker, 2nd week of October 1887, in Victor Merlhès (ed.), *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin: documents, témoignages: tome premier, 1873-1888*, Paris 1984, no. 133: 'Je rapporterai une douzaine de toiles dont 4 avec des figures supérieures à mon époque de Pont-Aven.'
- 02 The fourth work must be either *Near the Huts* (1887, private collection, see fig. 3) or *Women Carrying Fruit on the Beach of Anse Turin* (1887, private collection).
- 03 See Joost van der Hoeven, 'Martinique Visualized', in Maite van Dijk and Joost van der Hoeven (eds.), *Gauguin and Laval in Martinique*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Bussum 2018, pp. 76-103.
- 04 The drawing in question is *Sketches of Three Figures and Cats* (1887, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, reproduced in Van Dijk and Van der Hoeven 2018, p. 122, fig. 110). The motif was used for the following paintings: *Coming and Going: Martinique* (1887, Museo Thyssen Bornemisza, Madrid), *Tropical Conversation* (1887, private collection) and *Women Carrying Fruit on the Beach of Anse Turin* (1887, private collection).
- 05 The third large study sheet is *Martinican Women* (1887, private collection); see the entry for [The Mango Trees, Martinique](#).
- 06 See the text box in Daniel Wildenstein, Sylvie Crussard and Martine Heudron, *Gauguin: premier itinéraire d'un sauvage: catalogue de l'œuvre peint (1873-1888)*, 2 vols. Milan 2001, vol. 2, p. 343. (Hereafter Crussard 2001). It is not known which technique he used to transfer the image.
- 07 It is possible that Gauguin took this unknown sheet with him to Martinique. We know that he took at least one other elaborate drawing, likewise dating from 1885: the recto of this sheet displays a preparatory study for the painting *Women Bathing, Dieppe* (1885, National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo), whereas the verso is filled with Martinican figures. The sheet in question is *Study for the Painting 'Women Bathing, Dieppe'* (1885, recto), *Various Sketches* (1887, verso), Conseil départemental de La Réunion – Musée Léon-Dierx, Saint-Denis de la Réunion.
- 08 This work is reproduced in Van Dijk and Van der Hoeven 2018, p. 100, fig. 71. For the decoration of this fan, Gauguin may just as likely have taken as his example *On the Banks of the River, Martinique*, even though he parted with the painting soon after his return to France. In December 1887, Gauguin exchanged it for two paintings by Van Gogh. See n. 21 in this entry.
- 09 Joost van der Hoeven, 'Avant et pendant: Gauguin's artistic development before and during Martinique', in Joost van der Hoeven and Maite van Dijk (eds.), *Van Gogh Museum Studies 3: Gauguin and Laval in Martinique*, forthcoming.
- 10 The works in question are *Landscape with Tall Trees* by Pissarro (1878, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) and *La moisson* by Cézanne (c. 1877, private collection). See Merette Bodelsen, 'Gauguin, the Collector', *The Burlington Magazine* 112 (1970), pp. 611 and 605, respectively.
- 11 Such as *Coastal Landscape of Martinique (The Bay of Saint-Pierre, Martinique)* (1887, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) and *Path under the Palms* (1887, private collection).

- 12 In Gauguin's correspondence up to and including 1887 there is no indication whatsoever that he drew inspiration from Japanese prints. See also Crussard 2001, p. 313.
- 13 See Joachim Pissarro and Claire Durand-Ruel Snollaerts, *Pissarro: Critical Catalogue of Paintings*, Paris 2005, cat. 653. Given that in 1883 Pissarro was considered to be Gauguin's mentor and that Gauguin was living in Paris and frequented the gallery of Paul Durand-Ruel, it may be assumed that Gauguin had seen Pissarro's solo exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery. Moreover, Gauguin often visited Pissarro in Pontoise, where he must have seen more works in which the master employed a high vantage-point.
- 14 René Boitelle, Renate Poggendorf and Lesley Stevenson, "'A Decisive Experience': A Technical Examination of Martinique Paintings by Paul Gauguin and Charles Laval", in Van der Hoeven and Van Dijk, forthcoming.
- 15 Gauguin chose the title *Conversation (Tropiques)* when he exhibited the work at Les XX in 1889. See the catalogue *6e exposition des XX*, Musée royal de peinture, Brussels 1889, no. 2.
- 16 See Bodelsen 1970, p. 611, no. 38, and Pissarro and Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005, cat. 651.
- 17 Paul Gauguin, letter to Emile Schuffenecker, beginning of July 1887, in Victor Merlhès, *Paul Gauguin et Vincent van Gogh, 1887-1888: lettres retrouvées, sources ignorées*, Taravao 1989, pp. 39-42.
- 18 Joost van der Hoeven, 'Martinique Experienced', in Van Dijk and Van der Hoeven 2018, pp. 62-64.
- 19 Joost van der Hoeven, 'Martinique Visualized', in Van Dijk and Van der Hoeven 2018, pp. 92-94.
- 20 Rémi Poindexter, 'Images of Martinique in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in Van der Hoeven and Maite Van Dijk, forthcoming.
- 21 The fact that Van Gogh acquired this work through an exchange emerges from his letter to Willemien van Gogh of 31 July 1888 [↗ \[653\]](#): 'We also have a second painting by him [Gauguin] which he exchanged for a study of mine, a dried-up river with purple mud and pools of water that reflect the pure cobalt blue of the sky, green grass. A negro boy with a red and white cow, a n. in blue, and some green forest' ('Wij hebben nog een tweede schilderij van hem dat hij voor een studie van mij heeft geruild, een uitgedroogde rivier met paarsch slijk en plassen water die het zuiver cobalt blaauw van de lucht spiegelen, groen gras. een negerjongen met een wit en roode koe, een n. in blaauw. en wat groen bosch'). The fact that Gauguin had received two paintings of sunflowers emerges from the letter that Vincent sent to Theo on 17 January 1889 [↗ \[736\]](#), in which he expresses his displeasure at Gauguin's request for one of the paintings of sunflowers produced in Arles: 'But for the moment I'm keeping my canvases here, and I'm categorically keeping those sunflowers of mine. He already has two of them, let that be enough for him. And if he's unhappy with the exchange he made with me he can take back his little canvas of Martinique and his portrait that he sent me from Brittany, giving me back for his part both my portrait and my two canvases of sunflowers which he took in Paris' ('Mais pour le moment je garde mes toiles ici et categoriquement [*sic*] je garde moi mes tournesols en question. Il en a déjà deux, que cela lui suffise.- Et s'il n'est pas content de l'échange fait avec moi il peut reprendre sa petite toile de la Martinique et son portrait qu'il m'a renvoyé de Bretagne en me rendant de son côté et mon portrait et mes deux toiles de tournesols qu'il a prises à Paris').

- 22 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 15 July 1888 [↗ \[640\]](#): 'For the 2nd exhibition at the showroom on boul. de Clichy, I have fewer regrets about the time and effort. [Emile] Bernard having sold his first painting there, [Louis] Anquetin having sold a study there, and I having made the exchange with Gauguin, we all got something' ('Pour la 2me exposition dans la salle Bd de Clichy je regrette moins la peine. Bernard y ayant vendu son premier tableau, Anquetin y ayant vendu une etude [*sic*], moi ayant fait l'échange avec Gauguin, tous nous avons eu quelque chose').
- 23 The exchange probably took place after the purchase of *The Mango Trees*. In light of Gauguin's somewhat opportunistic nature, a selfless exchange with an 'unknown' artist is less likely than an exchange with an artist whose brother is an art dealer. This idea is supported by the fact that Van Gogh, in his letter of 31 July 1888 to his sister Willemien [↗ \[653\]](#), stated that he and Theo 'also have a second painting by him'.
- 24 Paul Gauguin, letter to Vincent van Gogh, December 1887 [↗ \[576\]](#): 'If you come on my behalf you will find at Cluzel's, the framer in rue Fontaine, a painting that I have delivered for you (for our exchange). [...] Forgive me if I do not come to collect your paintings myself, I am so rarely in your part of town. I shall collect them from 19 boulevard Montmartre if you will be so kind as to leave them there' ('En venant de ma part vous trouverez chez Cluzel encadreur Rue Fontaine un tableau que j'ai remis à votre intention (pour notre échange). [...] 'Excusez-moi si je ne viens pas moi-même chercher les vôtres, je vais si peu dans votre quartier. Je les prendrai 19 Boulevard Montmartre si vous voulez bien les déposer à cet endroit'). Gauguin was living at this time with Emile Schuffenecker at 29 rue Boulevard, in Montparnasse, which was in fact on the other side of town.
- 25 Ibid.: 'Si il ne vous convenait pas faites m'en part en venant vous-même choisir.'
- 26 Ambroise Vollard, *Souvenirs d'un marchand de tableaux*, Paris 1937, p. 196: 'Je me souviens particulièrement des trois Van Gogh qui étaient au-dessus de son lit: au milieu, un paysage dans une note mauve; à droite et à gauche, des *Tournesols*.' In the middle hung *Wheatfield with Reaper* (1889, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam).
- 27 Rebecca Rabinow (ed.), *Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant Garde*, New York 2006, p. 374.