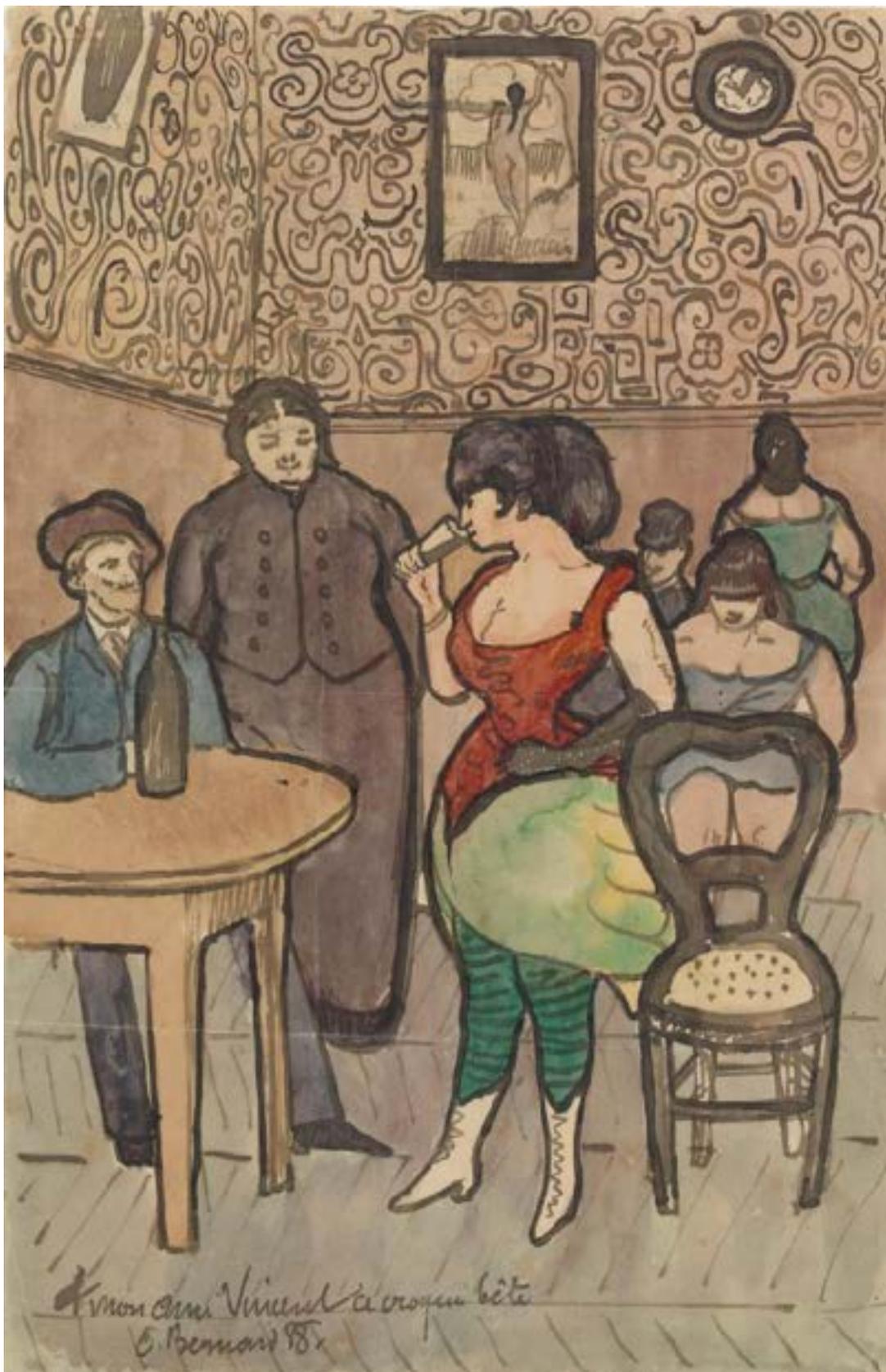




Paris
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Brothel Scene
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Female Nude Reclining on a Bed
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



A Woman Washing Herself
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Female Nude on a Bed
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



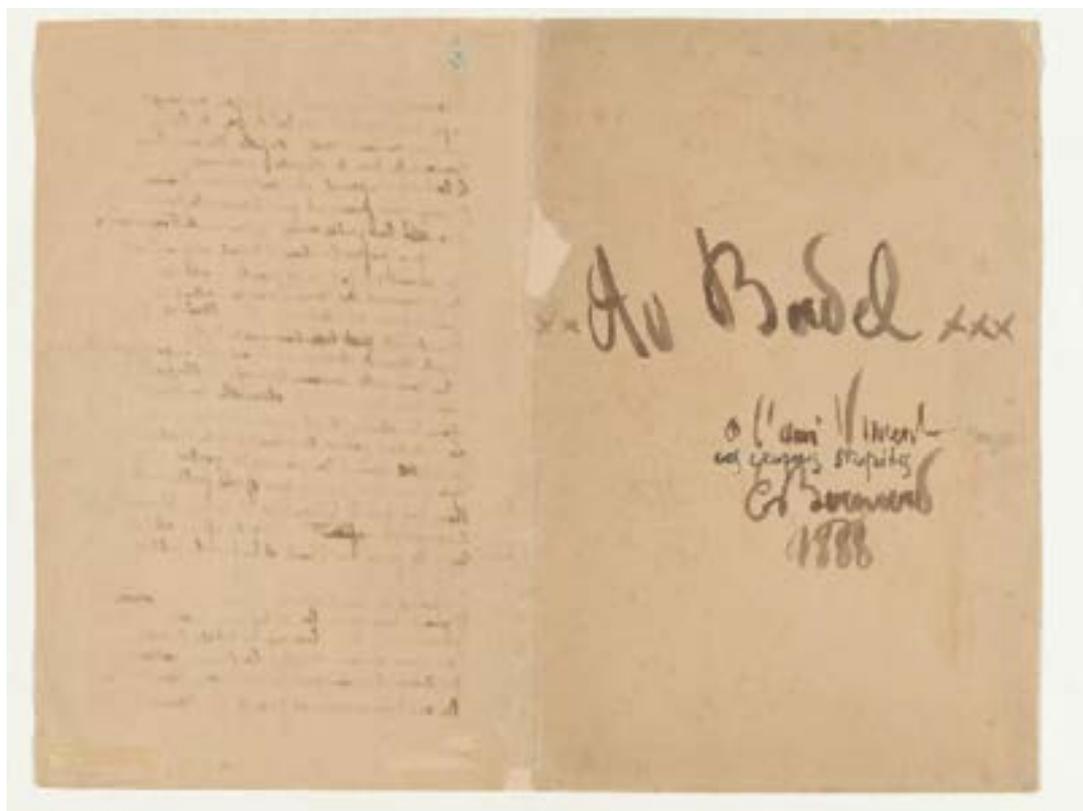
Lustfulness (Lubrilité)
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Women Bathing
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Sketches of Prostitutes
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Cover of the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Look at the Trees Losing Their Coats, Even Though It's Not the Time to Let Them Go from the series *Au Bordel*

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



You See, It's Not the Men Who Frighten Me from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



What's New, Married Women Are Always Competing with Us from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



In the Garden from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



At Fifteen I Could Only Feel Disgust for Life, because I Had Lost All My Illusions from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



The Ladies Are in the Salon from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



No One Can Pull a Man's Strings as Well as Me from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



A Comb Has Teeth, but It Doesn't Eat from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



Tell Me When You're Ready from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



You Have to Finish Where You Start from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888



This Is the Tomb of My Dreams from the series Au Bordel
Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941), 1888

Works Collected by Theo and Vincent van Gogh

Brothel Scenes

Emile Bernard

Discussions about the direction of contemporary art were central to the friendship between Emile Bernard (1868–1941) and Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890). They engaged in conversations about sources of inspiration, style and technique, and delved into the subjects their progressive paintings should depict. Prostitution was a major topic, one that they must have discussed frequently during their extensive time together in Paris in 1887.

Van Gogh even gave Bernard two of his explicit contemporary nudes (fig. 1 and fig. 2).⁰¹ The subversive nature of this theme, which was at the core of the cultural, social and moral debates of their era, intrigued both artists. It thus infused their works with a distinctly modern charge.⁰²

In the exchange of letters and drawings between Bernard and Van Gogh, which commenced after Van Gogh's departure for Arles on 19 February 1888, prostitution continued to be an important topic of discussion.

Regrettably, Bernard's letters have not been preserved, but almost all the drawings he sent to Van Gogh are now in the Van Gogh Museum.⁰³ Of these twenty-seven drawings, seventeen feature sex workers.

Additionally, two other drawings encompass plays on sexuality in an allegorical way. Furthermore, Bernard included poems he had written about prostitution in three of his letters. Van Gogh reciprocated by sending Bernard fifteen drawings and enlivened some of his letters with accompanying sketches.⁰⁴

Bernard drew inspiration for his prostitution drawings from a variety of sources spanning high and low culture. He incorporated elements from satirical magazine illustrations, folk chansons, Symbolist poetry and naturalist literature. A notable aspect of Bernard's approach was his experimentation in combining word and image, infusing his drawings with narrative content akin to magazine illustrations. The hasty nature of his sketches suggests that they were not intended as finished works of art but rather as visualizations for artistic discussions. The fact that Bernard sent all these drawings relating to prostitution to Van Gogh indicates that he considered Van Gogh an important participant in the pursuit of innovative art, with prostitution taking centre stage therein. Van Gogh served as a sounding board for Bernard's interdisciplinary approach to this subject. While we are unable to read Bernard's commentary on the drawings, Van Gogh's extensive critique affords insight into the exchange of ideas between the two friends.

This entry deals with all seventeen prostitution drawings and the two allegorical works, as well as the three poems on the subject that Bernard sent to Van Gogh. These works were dispatched in five separate shipments between April and October 1888. Given the significance of these drawings in Bernard's dialogue with Van Gogh, considerable attention is paid to Van Gogh's critique throughout this entry. However, before diving into the discussion of each individual work and Van Gogh's reaction to them, it is important to understand the sources of inspiration that propelled Bernard to make these prostitution drawings.



Vincent van Gogh, *Reclining Nude*, 1887, oil on canvas, 23.8 × 40.9 cm, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo. Photo: Rik Klein Gotink

The first prostitution drawings

The fascination with prostitution was not new to the young Bernard, who had been exploring this subject in his drawings since 1885. One of his earlier works, *The Dive (Le bourge)* (fig. 3), exemplifies his interest in the theme.⁰⁵ During this period, Bernard was studying at Fernand Cormon's (1845–1924) *atelier libre*, where he met Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) and Louis Anquetin (1861–1932), among others. They introduced him to Montmartre's nightlife, where prostitution was prevalent.⁰⁶ The clandestine nature of prostitution, particularly with the unregistered sex workers, so called *filles insoumises* ('insubordinate women') who offered their services on the streets, in café-concerts, cabarets and brasseries, captured Bernard's attention.⁰⁷ Anquetin and Toulouse-Lautrec used the prostitution in Montmartre as a decidedly contemporary theme in their art. In 1886, for instance, Anquetin painted an ambitious studio piece titled *Le Mirliton*, depicting the interior of the eponymous cabaret, where a sex worker gazes seductively at the viewer and thereby assumes a provocative leading role. Interestingly, Bernard himself served as the model for the figure to the left at the table (fig. 4). While Toulouse-Lautrec's references to prostitution were not as explicit then as in his later work of the 1890s, he nevertheless often seized on the subject, as seen, for example, in *Artilleryman and Woman* (fig. 5).

What stands out about both Bernard's *The Dive (Le bouge)* and Anquetin's and Toulouse-Lautrec's paintings is their shared cheerful and satirical nature. Their nocturnal scenes, brimming with festivities and entertainment, captured the visual culture of Montmartre's exuberant and bohemian life. While the inclusion of prostitution could have been a subject for criticism given the inhumane French tolerance policy of the late nineteenth century, which offered sex workers no rights whatsoever, these artists viewed it more as a symptom of society's underbelly, inseparably linked to Montmartre, and even celebrated it in that context. This perspective was explicitly depicted in satirical magazines originating from Montmartre, like *Le Courrier français*, which overflowed with caricatural erotic illustrations and brothel scenes, often drenched in tongue-in-cheek irony.⁰⁸

Le Courrier français was a weekly magazine featuring art, satire and entertainment. Modern painters such as Adolphe Willette (1857–1926), Jean-Louis Forain (1852–1931) and Ferdinand Lunel (1857–1949) contributed illustrations, for example Lunel's *At the Masked Ball of the Opera (Au bal masqué de l'Opéra)* (fig. 6) and Forain's *...?...!!!.....* (fig. 7), lending the publication a strong artistic appeal. The magazine's provocative images caught the attention of French authorities. Even though press freedom was signed into law in 1881, an addendum prohibiting 'indecent' illustrations and texts was introduced in 1882. By consistently pushing the boundaries of acceptability, *Le Courrier français* fearlessly exposed the hypocrisy of these regulations, earning a reputation as a rebellious provocateur fighting for total freedom of the press.⁰⁹ Simultaneously, with its bold and daring illustrations the magazine aimed to stand out amid the numerous other publications on the newsstands.¹⁰ The combination of high artistic quality on the one hand and continuous controversy and recurring scandals on the other meant that avant-garde artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Anquetin and, in their wake, the young Bernard found an inexhaustible source of inspiration in the illustrations of *Le Courrier français*. They saw the provocative, satirical depictions of eroticism and prostitution as suitable modern subjects for their art. Besides *Le Courrier français*, publications such as *Gil Blas* and *Le Mirliton* were also infused with eroticism, social criticism and humour, much like the many other cultural expressions spawned in Montmartre, such as the cabaret of Le Chat Noir and the chansons of Aristide Bruant (1851–1925).¹¹

Toulouse-Lautrec, Anquetin and Bernard approached prostitution as a modern subject for their art, examining it through the satirical lens of Montmartre's culture, of which *Le Courrier français* was one of the most significant manifestations.¹² In Bernard's early brothel drawings, like *The Dive (Le bourge)*, a playful approach is noticeable, in this case through not only the title but also the inclusion of the number '69' above the entrance to the seedy brothel. Bernard wrote the title of the work at the bottom of the image, ruling out any other reading of the scene. He would use this combination of text and image regularly, including in many of the drawings he sent to Van Gogh, demonstrating the influence of magazine illustrations on his style.

The exchange between Van Gogh and Bernard

Bernard's satirical approach to prostitution remained prevalent in his work, and this same vein of satire is evident in the drawings he sent to Arles in 1888. This not only indicates Bernard's awareness of Van Gogh's understanding of humour and appreciation of subtlety but also affirms that the friends had already engaged in discussion about the subject of prostitution in these terms in Paris. Van Gogh himself once drew a sex worker washing herself over a basin on the back of a Paris restaurant menu (fig. 8). Moreover, he made a drawing of a plump woman walking her dog, with a text underneath referencing Bruant's chanson *A la Villette* (fig. 9). In this way, like Bernard, Van Gogh employed iconographic codes and the caricatural style reminiscent of illustrations found in magazines like *Le Courrier francais*.¹³

The discourse on prostitution as a modern subject for painting also touched on another pivotal theme in the intellectual exchanges between Bernard and Van Gogh, namely the juxtaposition of working from the imagination versus depicting visible reality. Bernard's drawings of prostitution were an imaginary synthesis of his impressions from Montmartre and the imagery he encountered in publications like *Le Courrier francais*. In addition, Bernard drew inspiration from poetry and literature that addressed the theme of prostitution. Popular literary works exploring the subject included *La fille Elisa* (1877) by Edmond de Goncourt, a novel recounting the tragic fate of a young girl destined to become a sex worker and eventually imprisoned. Another influential publication was *La maison Tellier* (1881) by Guy de Maupassant, a collection of light-hearted tales set in a Normandy brothel. Above all, Bernard held the greatest admiration for the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, whose poems from the collection *Les fleurs du mal* (1857) dealt with themes including desire, eroticism and prostitution. The famous poem 'Lesbos', for instance, is an allegorical hymn to lust.¹⁴ Bernard acknowledged his indebtedness to Baudelaire by inscribing the poem's title beneath a quick sketch of a sex worker striking a 'seductive' pose (fig. 10).

Baudelaire's imaginary worlds prompted Bernard to mine his own imagination for his prostitution drawings. Although Van Gogh admired this in Bernard, he himself needed more solid ground under his feet. His own work was necessarily rooted in reality.¹⁵ Bernard's invented, satirical brothel scenes failed to inspire him to depict similar imaginary scenes on paper. His Parisian effigies of a sex worker (see fig. 1 and fig. 2) were painted from models, and he hoped to produce any future brothel scenes from reality as well.¹⁶



Emile Bernard, *Lesbos*, sketch from the album *A Painter's Childhood (L'enfance d'un peintre)* (p. 104), c. 1887, pen and ink on paper, Kunsthalle Bremen – Der Kunstverein in Bremen

The first two shipments: *Paris* and *Brothel Scene*

Paris and *Brothel Scene* are the first known drawings that Bernard sent to Van Gogh. He dispatched *Paris* shortly after his arrival in Saint-Briac on 25 April 1888, commencing his third consecutive summer in Brittany.

¹⁷ *Brothel Scene* followed two months later. ¹⁸ In *Paris*, Bernard portrayed street prostitution utilizing the well-established trope of a woman standing beneath a streetlamp. In the art and literature of the late nineteenth century, the lanterns illuminating the boulevards at night symbolized the underworld that thrived in darkness. The dimly lit boulevards were perceived as the domain of sex workers, who stepped into the literal and metaphorical light beneath the lanterns. ¹⁹ With the ironic inscription 'Paris' at the lower left of the scene, Bernard jokingly labelled street prostitution as a fitting metaphor for the city as a whole. With schematically rendered street fronts, solid contours, abrupt cropping and a tilted perspective reminiscent of Japanese prints, Bernard depicted the boulevard de Clichy, the central hub of Montmartre. The background of the composition features factory chimneys belonging to the nearby industrial suburbs of Clichy and Levallois, serving as a visual reference and indicating that we are looking west.

In *Brothel Scene*, Bernard depicted a moment in which a sex worker seduces a customer in the salon of a brothel, while the owner of the establishment (the madame) looks on with approval. On the salon's back wall is a picture of Eve in Paradise, a nod to the 'fall' that is about to occur. To emphasize the drawing's light-hearted intent, Bernard added a note at the bottom of the sheet: 'To my friend Vincent, this silly sketch' ('À mon ami Vincent ce croquis bête'). The scene depicted in the drawing is comparable to a painted brothel scene Bernard may have produced in the same period, titled *Interior of a Brothel* (fig. 11), a painting about which Bernard wrote to Van Gogh. ²⁰ Both works delve into the theme of customers being seduced by sex workers. The painting differs from the drawing mainly in terms of the ingenious composition, which infuses the scene with heightened tension and dynamic energy. In contrast, the drawing lacks this sense of tension and is rather flat.

Both *Paris* and *Brothel Scene* were made on a sheet of wove paper measuring approximately 31 by 20 cm. These dimensions correspond to the size of the sketchbooks that Bernard consistently used from 1886 onwards. These sheets must have come from the same type of sketchbook, as is evident from the torn edge along one of the long sides. ²¹ Bernard drew the works in black ink, some of which he applied with a brush to depict the woman's clothes and hair in *Paris*. In the case of *Brothel Scene*, he used watercolour to fill in certain passages, adding a few lines in black ink for the finishing touches. ²²

The varying thickness of the black ink lines in these drawings indicates that Bernard worked with reed pens. Reed pens are crafted from reed stems, with the point of the pen cut in a specific manner. By varying the sharpness of these points, an artist can control the thickness of the line produced. It is quite possible that Bernard acquired knowledge of this technique from Van Gogh during his time in Paris. Having studied the drawing manual *Guide pratique pour les différents genres de dessin* (1873) by the painter Armand Théophile Cassagne (1823-1907), Van Gogh knew how to fashion reed pens. ²³ Although he did not use this technique in Paris, he enthusiastically embraced it upon his arrival in Arles. In Cassagne's guide, Van Gogh likely read that the most suitable reeds were found in the south of France, and he must have discussed this with Bernard prior to heading in that direction. This may have been the reason why Bernard went in search of reeds with which to make pens while sojourning in Brittany. Bernard's use of the reed pen illustrates how the exchange of ideas between him and Van Gogh encompassed not only artistic subject matter but also the craft involved in being an artist. It is worth noting that Bernard employed a reed pen for all the other prostitution drawings he sent to Van Gogh as well.

Van Gogh admired both *Paris* and *Brothel Scene*, expressing his fondness for them in his letters to Bernard. He described *Paris* as 'really pretty', and about *Brothel Scene* he wrote: 'the CROQUIS IS VERY VERY INTERESTING', emphasizing his appreciation of Bernard's satirical and anecdotal drawings. ²⁴ He sent the drawings to his brother Theo (1857-1891), requesting that *Brothel Scene* be hung in the Paris flat alongside Bernard's painting *The Acrobats (Les saltimbanques)* (1887). ²⁵ Additionally, Van Gogh believed that Theo should acquire a painting by Bernard in response to this drawing, although this ultimately did not happen. ²⁶ Furthermore, *Brothel Scene* served as a catalyst for Van Gogh to start sending individual drawings to Bernard himself. ²⁷ One of them was *The Zouave* (fig. 12), about which Van Gogh wrote: 'If we executed a brothel together, I'm sure we'd use the study of the Zouave as a character type in it.' ²⁸

Both *Paris* and *Brothel Scene* were accompanied by poems written by Bernard (see [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#)) that were thematically linked to the subject matter. They were penned in the spirit of Baudelaire, whose poetry had spurred Bernard's own poetic endeavours since at least 1887.²⁹ The poem belonging to *Paris* was titled 'La prostitution' and was sent as a loose sheet along with the drawing.³⁰ It began with a satirical reflection on street prostitution in general but concluded with a thought on the possibility of the righteousness behind the supposed immorality of the sex worker. This might have been inspired by Baudelaire's seminal essay 'Le peintre de la vie moderne' (1863), in which he argued that the sex worker possessed a certain hidden beauty.³¹ While Bernard's emphasis differed, the link between prostitution and beauty likely derived from the poet. As mentioned, Bernard wrote a poem on the back of the sheet of *Brothel Scene* as well (fig. 13). This time, his verses constituted an explicit indictment of a depraved system that victimizes women, reducing them to mere flesh. Bernard had previously explored this theme in a large virtuoso drawing of a brothel with the Baudelairean title *The Hour of the Flesh (L'heure de la viande)* (fig. 14).³² It is difficult to reconcile the serious tone of this poem with the satirical drawing on the front of the sheet - a flirtatious *croquis bête* depicting a sex worker seducing a customer.

Despite drawing inspiration from Baudelaire's poems, Bernard's attempts to capture the striking allegorical qualities that permeated the celebrated poet's work fell short. Unlike Baudelaire's poetry, which is a metaphor-shrouded celebration of society's underbelly, Bernard's two poems come off as literal, critical and moralistic in nature. This approach garnered criticism from Van Gogh, who found fault with the concluding lines of the poem 'La prostitution', referring to them as 'banal'. Van Gogh's critique likely stemmed from Bernard's reliance on a literary and clichéd portrayal of a 'sublime' woman hidden in the guise of a sex worker in the last stanza. For him, Bernard's poem lacked the authenticity of personal observations, instead leaning too heavily on literature and poetry. Consequently, Van Gogh found the wistful ending implausible: 'A "sublime" woman, I don't know what you mean by that, nor do you in this case.'³³

In the poem on the back of *Brothel Scene*, Van Gogh observed a lack of analytical or allegorical distance from the subject matter. He felt that Bernard was taking a stand against a society that allowed prostitution, which in his view was not the task of the modern artist. In a letter to Bernard, he wrote: 'To report the facts [...] is to wield the lancet like a surgeon explaining anatomy. I listen, meditative and interested; I watch, but if, later, the surgeon-anatomist is going to moralise at me like that, I find that that last tirade doesn't have the same value as the anatomy demonstration. To study, to analyse society, that always says more than moralising.'³⁴

Furthermore, Van Gogh believed that as artists they were not in a position to show mercy towards the sex worker from a lofty standpoint. Instead of merely feeling compassion with a moralizing attitude, he expressed a sense of identification with the sex worker. 'The whore in question has my sympathy more than my compassion. Being exiled, a social outcast, as artists like you and I surely are, "outcasts" too, she is surely therefore our friend and sister. And finding - in this position - of outcast - the same as us - an independence that isn't without its advantages - all things considered - let's not adopt a false position by believing we're serving her through social rehabilitation, which is in any case impractical and would be fatal for her.'³⁵ Van Gogh stressed that the modern artist needed to engage with the sex worker from a position of equality in order to describe or paint her authentically. After all, both the artist and the sex worker were challenging the bourgeois norms and values of society, and although they faced scorn for doing so, therein lay a certain heroism.

With his admiration for the *Paris* and *Brothel Scene* drawings on the one hand, and his disapproval of the accompanying poems on the other, Van Gogh made it evident where he drew his boundary in the discussion. While he appreciated the anecdotal and satirical depictions of prostitution, he disagreed with the artist expressing overly moralistic viewpoints about the subject matter.

The third shipment: Brothel Scenes and Allegorical Drawings

The third shipment of drawings, received by Van Gogh on 29 July 1888, consisted of ten drawings encompassing various subjects. Among them were three sheets depicting a sex worker alone in her room: *Female Nude Reclining on a Bed*, *A Woman Washing Herself* and *Female Nude on a Bed*. This package also included the two drawings by Bernard that alluded allegorically to sexuality: *Lustfulness (Lubricité)* and *Women Bathing*.³⁶ All five drawings were done on the same type of wove paper as *Paris* and *Brothel Scene*, indicating that they came from the same sketchbook. Bernard once again applied his ink lines with a reed pen.

In addition to the vigorous and powerful lines that characterized Bernard's drawings, he brought life to them through his ingenious use of a limited palette in watercolour. This is clear to see in his *Female Nude Reclining on a Bed*. By mixing the watercolour with different amounts of water or even a little black ink, he achieved a wide range of tonal variations within the same colour. He also placed several layers on top of each other or added shading with pen and ink after the watercolour had dried. For *Female Nude Reclining on a Bed*, Bernard used only two hues of watercolour apart from the black ink; however, his skilful handling of dilution, layering and shading enhanced the contrast and dynamics of the composition.³⁷

Van Gogh commended the three brothel drawings by Bernard, albeit in a somewhat reserved manner. He deemed the drawing *A Woman Washing Herself* 'charming'.³⁸ However, in a letter to Theo, Van Gogh's enthusiasm was more evident as he went on to describe the same drawing as 'Rembrandtesque': high praise indeed.³⁹ Van Gogh held Rembrandt in high regard, considering him one of the most important painters in the history of art due to his sincerity and realism, among other qualities.⁴⁰ This comparison is noteworthy, especially considering the discussions about Bernard's poems and Van Gogh's criticism regarding a lack of observation. *A Woman Washing Herself*, *Female Nude Reclining on a Bed* and *Female Nude on a Bed* appear more lifelike and less anecdotal compared to works like *Paris* or *Brothel Scene*. Bernard depicted the nudity of his subjects realistically rather than idealistically. All three drawings will have prompted Van Gogh to make the reference to Rembrandt.⁴¹ The intimate portrayal of a sex worker, depicted alone in her room, may have evoked associations with Rembrandt for Van Gogh, who often praised the master for capturing intimacy in his paintings.⁴² Furthermore, Bernard's drawings share a sense of intimacy with the explicit monotypes of sex workers by Edgar Degas (1834–1917), such as *Reading after the Bath (La toilette, lecture après le bain)* (fig. 15). Unlike Degas, however, Bernard did not work directly from a model but rather relied on his imagination and the works of other artists. After all, he created them in the small village of Saint-Briac in Brittany, where there were likely no brothels.

In addition to the comparison with Rembrandt, Van Gogh also drew a parallel between *A Woman Washing Herself* and the work of Francisco Goya (1746–1828). While this could have been because of the unabashed realism in his portraits, Van Gogh never wrote about the Spanish painter in those terms. Instead, he praised Goya for his masterful use of black.⁴³ The abundant use of black ink to indicate shadows in *A Woman Washing Herself* might have reminded Van Gogh of Goya in this respect.

The drawings *Lustfulness (Lubricité)* and *Women Bathing*, which Bernard sent with the 29 July shipment, were less to Van Gogh's liking. He wrote: 'I don't like your drawing *Lubricity* as much as the others.'⁴⁴ He described *Women Bathing* to Theo as 'a very strange landscape with figures'.⁴⁵ In general, Van Gogh mentioned that of the drawings in the shipment, 'there are 3 of them that are in the style of Redon; the enthusiasm that he has for that I don't much share myself.'⁴⁶ *Lustfulness (Lubricité)* and *Women Bathing* probably belonged to this group.⁴⁷ Both were produced in the vein of *Le Courrier français*. However, they did not appeal to Van Gogh. *Lustfulness (Lubricité)* can be interpreted as a not particularly subtle reference to female lust and the male sexual organ. As for *Women Bathing*, the poses of the figures used by Bernard evoke associations with sin or shame. For example, the woman looking in her mirror in the background refers to vanity, and the pose of the woman on the left alludes to Eve's fall from grace. The other two women cover their sexual organs, either by holding a hand in front, like Venus, or by turning their back to the viewer.⁴⁸ Bernard expressly forbade Van Gogh to show these drawings to anyone else; his friend, however, could have cared less and immediately forwarded them to Theo.⁴⁹

The fourth shipment of sketches: a two-sided sketch on stationery

The eighth sheet in the group of prostitution sketches arrived by mail around 25 September 1888. Drawn on both sides, this small sheet of vergé paper was bought as stationery from Au Printemps. The department store's watermark is clearly visible on the paper, and the sheet is folded like a letter, probably before Bernard drew on it. ⁵⁰ The front side of the sheet features two rapidly executed sketches of sex workers: one working on the street, the other in a room. As in *Paris*, Bernard used a streetlamp as a symbol of street prostitution. On the verso, Bernard presented a brothel scene set in a salon. For all the sketches, Bernard wrote satirical texts in a Parisian argot, aligning the drawings with cultural expressions of Montmartre. For instance, accompanying the drawing of the sex worker on the street, he wrote: 'love is forty cents and dirty water in a basin' ('l'amour c'est quarante sous et l'eau sale dans une cuvette'), alluding to the sex worker's shattered illusions in a clichéd manner, analogous to Goncourt's novel *La fille Elisa*. Above the drawing of the sex worker in her room, Bernard wrote 'ptit. boul', referencing 'Le petit boulevard', the term Van Gogh had coined to designate Montmartre.

The last shipment: 'Au bordel'

In early October 1888, Bernard concluded his series of brothel drawings with a uniform set of eleven drawings depicting life in and around the brothel.⁵¹ The eleven sheets of wove paper, measuring approximately 40.5 × 26.5 cm, are all torn from the same cahier. Bernard gathered them together and created a title page double the size of the separate drawings, by removing it from the middle of his cahier. On the front, he wrote in a tone of boys among themselves 'To (my) friend Vincent, these silly sketches' (À l'ami Vincent ces croquis stupides'). Inside, he included his third and final poem on prostitution for Van Gogh (see [Appendix 3](#)). Although the drawings may appear to have been executed hastily, Bernard skilfully used a limited palette of watercolours to elevate them beyond mere scratches. However, having received handfuls of sketchy drawings, Van Gogh instead insisted on something 'fairly worked up'; Bernard apparently refused to oblige him.⁵²

The caption on the title page indicated that Bernard had also chosen a satirical approach for the last brothel drawings he would send to Van Gogh. Combining word and image – as he had done with the stationery, but which had essentially been customary for him from his first brothel drawings in 1885 – Bernard added text to underscore the satirical intent of his drawings. By employing argot and wordplay, Bernard made it clear that his drawings belonged to the Montmartrois tradition of humorous and caricatural depictions of prostitution that mocked social conventions. Due to the large number of scenes, *At the Brothel (Au bordel)* essentially functions as the culmination of Bernard's prostitution drawings inspired by *Le Courrier français*, in which he played with various satirical topoi. For example, in *No One Can Pull a Man's Strings as Well as Me (Y en a pas deux comme moi pour travailler un homme)* Bernard explored the stereotypical image of the self-assured sex worker who knows how to manipulate men. In *At Fifteen I Could Only Feel Disgust for Life, because I Had Lost All My Illusions (A quinze ans j'dois dégoûter de la vie parce que j'avais perdu toutes mes illusions)*, he parodied the clichéd narrative of a young woman sinking deeper into misery à la Goncourt and Emile Zola (1840–1902). The series also included some drawings depicting uncomfortable and intimate scenes that take place within the confines of the brothel room, such as *This is the Tomb of My Dreams (Vla l'tombeau de mes rêves)*, where both the sex worker and her client examine the contents of her basin. It is worth noting that the composition of the drawing *You Have to Finish Where You Start (Il faut finir par où l'on commence)* is strikingly similar to Van Gogh's drawing of a sex worker washing herself over a basin. Bernard undoubtedly knew the drawing and made several quick sketches studying the motif (fig. 16).

Van Gogh expressed both praise and criticism of the series. He particularly admired the sheets *No One Can Pull a Man's Strings as Well as Me (Y en a pas deux comme moi pour travailler un homme)* and *One Must End Where One Begins (Il faut finir par où l'on commence)*.⁵³ This time the poem Bernard had written to accompany the series withstood Van Gogh's critical reading. More than the previous two poems, it was both a celebration and an apt allegorical characterization of prostitution, with Bernard making no personal judgement on the subject. Van Gogh therefore found it 'really beautiful'. He did, however, have some reservations regarding the execution of the figures in the other drawings. He felt that they were 'too vague, too little flesh and bone properly built up'.⁵⁴ Despite this critique, Van Gogh appreciated the concept and purpose underlying the drawings: 'It doesn't matter; it's already something altogether new and interesting, and the rest, too – at the brothel – yes, that's what needs to be done.'⁵⁵



Vincent van Gogh, *The Brothel (Le Lupanar)*, 1888, oil on canvas, 33 × 41 cm, The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia

Although Van Gogh had a strong desire to paint brothels, he faced a significant challenge: his own insecurity when it came to painting from his imagination. Owing to financial constraints, he could not afford to hire sex workers from the brothel in Arles to pose for him, making imagination essential if he wished to capture such scenes. Eventually, Bernard's incessant supply of imaginary brothel drawings spurred Van Gogh to attempt painting comparable scenes from the imagination twice. In the first painting, which is unknown today, Van Gogh depicted a night café where sex workers cater to their patrons. The second imaginary painting portrays an anecdotal, flirtatious interaction between a sex worker and a customer in the parlour of a brothel fig. 17 . Van Gogh drew inspiration almost entirely from Bernard's *Brothel Scene* (the drawing Van Gogh received on 23 June), as well as Anquetin's *Le Mirliton* (see fig. 4).⁵⁶ However, Van Gogh kept this second attempt hidden from Bernard, possibly because he was dissatisfied with the result.

After Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) joined Van Gogh in Arles, the two artists made several 'forays' into brothels together. Van Gogh saw this as an opportunity to finally paint a brothel scene based on real-life observation. However, his plans to work in the brothels never came to fruition. Gauguin, on the other hand, used the experience of the visit to paint an imaginary brothel scene afterwards, thus confronting Van Gogh in the same way Bernard had done previously. The brothel thus again became a backdrop that highlighted Van Gogh's inability to paint from imagination. This limitation hindered his progress in exploring the subject further, which likely left him frustrated. Discussions between Gauguin and Van Gogh about painting from imagination versus painting from reality often escalated into heated arguments. As for his friends' imaginary brothel scenes, Van Gogh would never become more than a commentator.

Joost van der Hoeven
January 2024

Citation

Joost van der Hoeven, 'Brothel Scenes by Emile Bernard', catalogue entry in *Contemporaries of Van Gogh 1: Works Collected by Theo and Vincent*, Joost van der Hoeven (ed.), Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2024.
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 Copy citation



Object details

Paris

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and brush and black ink on wove paper

Dimensions

31.1 cm x 20 cm

Inscriptions

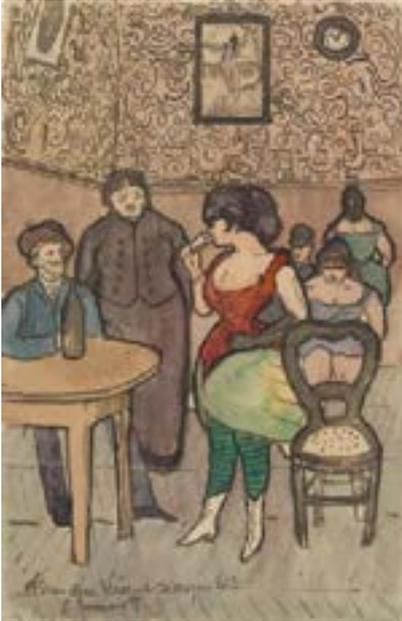
Paris.

Inventory Number

d0638V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Brothel Scene

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

31 cm x 20 cm

Inscriptions

E. Bernard 88

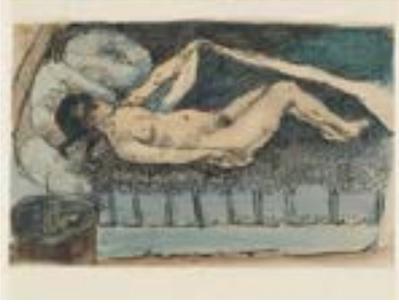
A mon ami Vincent ce croquis bête

Inventory Number

d0636V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Female Nude Reclining on a Bed

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

20.2 cm x 31 cm

Inscriptions

Inventory Number

d0637V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

A Woman Washing Herself

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and black ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

31.1 cm x 20.5 cm

Inventory Number

d0639V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Female Nude on a Bed

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and black ink and grey wash on wove paper

Dimensions

31 cm x 20.7 cm

Inscriptions

E. Bernard 88

Inventory Number

d0642V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Lustfulness (Lubricité)

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and pen and India ink on wove paper

Dimensions

31.2 cm x 20.3 cm

Inscriptions

E.B. 88.

LUBRICITÉ

Inventory Number

d0640V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Women Bathing

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and black ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

31 cm x 20.6 cm

Inscriptions

EB. 88

Inventory Number

d0641V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Sketches of Prostitutes

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and synthetic ink on laid paper

Dimensions

17.6 cm x 21.5 cm

Inscriptions

AU PRINTEMPS PARIS

Inventory Number

d0643V1962r

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Cover of the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 52.3 cm

Inscriptions

E. Bernard 1888

xx Au Bordel xxx

E. BERNARD

B-5140

à l'ami Vincent ces croquis stupides

Inventory Number

d0624V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Look at the Trees Losing Their Coats, Even Though It's Not the Time to Let Them Go from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

reed pen and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 27.6 cm

Inscriptions

-Vla les arbres qui perdet leur p'lure c'est c'pendant pas l'moment d'la lacher.

Inventory Number

d0623V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

You See, It's Not the Men Who Frighten Me from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.4 cm x 26.3 cm

Inscriptions

Les hommes vois tu, c'est pas ça qui m'fait peur.

Inventory Number

d0625V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

What's New, Married Women Are Always Competing with Us from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 28.7 cm

Inscriptions

- Quoi d'neuf. - Toujours les femmes mariées qui nous font concurrence.

Inventory Number

d0626V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

In the Garden from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.3 cm x 26.4 cm

Inscriptions

Au jardin

Inventory Number

d0627V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

At Fifteen I Could Only Feel Disgust for Life, because I Had Lost All My Illusions from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 26.5 cm

Inscriptions

-A quinze ans je dois degouter de la vie parceque j'arais perdu toutes mes illusions.

Inventory Number

d0628V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

The Ladies Are in the Salon from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 26.2 cm

Inscriptions

les dames sont au salon

Inventory Number

d0629V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

No One Can Pull a Man's Strings as Well as Me from the series
Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove
paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 26.9 cm

Inscriptions

Y en a pas deux comme moi pour travailler un homme.

Inventory Number

d0630V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh
Foundation)



Object details

A Comb Has Teeth, but It Doesn't Eat from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 26.4 cm

Inscriptions

- un peigne ça a des dents mais ça n'mange pas.

Inventory Number

d0631V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

Tell Me When You're Ready from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 25.6 cm

Inscriptions

Quand tu iras prêt tu l' dira!

Inventory Number

dO632V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

You Have to Finish Where You Start from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.4 cm x 26.4 cm

Inscriptions

Il faut finir par où l'on commence.

Inventory Number

d0633V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Object details

This Is the Tomb of My Dreams from the series Au Bordel

Artist

Emile Bernard (1868 - 1941)

Date

1888

Medium

brush and synthetic ink and transparent watercolour on wove paper

Dimensions

40.5 cm x 26.4 cm

Inscriptions

Vla l'tombeau de mes rêves

Inventory Number

d0634V1962

Credits

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Brothel Scene

Front & Back

Sketches of Prostitutes

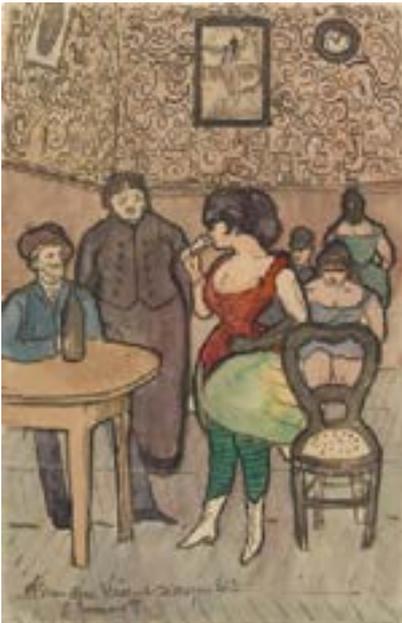
Front & Back



Provenance

Paris

Sent by the artist from Saint-Briac to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him between 25 April and 1 May 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, probably 1 May 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; 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

Brothel Scene

Sent by the artist from Saint-Briac to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on 23 June 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

Female Nude Reclining on a Bed

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

A Woman Washing Herself

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

Female Nude on a Bed

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

Lustfulness (Lubricité)

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

Women Bathing

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

Sketches of Prostitutes

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 25 September 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo van Gogh, Paris, late September or early October 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; 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

Cover of the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

Look at the Trees Losing Their Coats, Even Though It's Not the Time to Let Them Go from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

You See, It's Not the Men Who Frighten Me from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

What's New, Married Women Are Always Competing with Us from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

In the Garden from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

At Fifteen I Could Only Feel Disgust for Life, because I Had Lost All My Illusions from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

The Ladies Are in the Salon from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

No One Can Pull a Man's Strings as Well as Me from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

A Comb Has Teeth, but It Doesn't Eat from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

Tell Me When You're Ready from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

You Have to Finish Where You Start from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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.



Provenance

This Is the Tomb of My Dreams from the series Au Bordel

Sent by the artist from Pont-Aven to Vincent van Gogh, Arles; received by him on or shortly before 5 October 1888; sent by Vincent van Gogh to his brother, Theo van Gogh, Paris, on or shortly after 5 October 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; 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

Paris

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

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 5, *Girl in a Paris Street*

Kyoto, National Museum of Modern Art (Kyoto), *Vincent van Gogh and Japan*, 18 February-29 March 1992, no. 46, *Girl in a Paris Street*

Tokyo, Setagaya Art Museum, *Vincent van Gogh and Japan*, 4 April-24 May 1992, no. 46, *Girl in a Paris Street*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Licht! Het industriële tijdperk 1750-1900. Kunst en wetenschap, technologie & samenleving*, 20 October 2000-11 February 2001, *Girl in a Paris Street*

Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), Carnegie Museum of Art, *Light! The Industrial Age, 1750-1900: Art & Science, Technology & Society, 1750-1900*, 7 April-29 July 2001, *Girl in a Paris Street*

Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941), la peinture en colère*, 16 September 2014-5 January 2015, no. 77, *Femme sous un réverbère*



Exhibitions

Brothel Scene

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960

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

Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, *Vincent van Gogh and the Birth of Cloisonism*, 24 January-22 March 1981, no. 100, *Brothel Scene*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 6, *Brothel Scene*

Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941. A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 12 May-5 August 1990, no. 94, *Brothel Scene*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Emile Bernard*, 24 August-4 November 1990, no. 94, *Brothel Scene*

Kyoto, National Museum of Modern Art (Kyoto), *Vincent van Gogh and Japan*, 18 February-29 March 1992, no. 47, *Brothel Scene*

Tokyo, Setagaya Art Museum, *Vincent van Gogh and Japan*, 4 April-24 May 1992, no. 47, *Brothel Scene*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Theo van Gogh 1857-1891. Marchand de tableaux, collectionneur, frère de Vincent*, 27 September 1999-9 January 2000, no. 86, *Scène au bordel*

Washington, National Gallery of Art, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, 20 March-12 June 2005

Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, 16 July-10 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, no. 30, *Brothel Scene*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Van Goghs brieven. De kunstenaar aan het woord*, 9 October 2009-3 January 2010

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Van Gogh aan het werk*, 1 May 2013-13 January 2014, no. 233, *Bordeelscène*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Lichte zeden. Prostitutie in de Franse kunst, 1850-1910*, 19 February-19 June 2016, *Bordeelscène*



Exhibitions

Female Nude Reclining on a Bed

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 7, *Female Nude Reclining on a Bed*



Exhibitions

A Woman Washing Herself

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

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 9, *A Woman Making Her Toilet*



Exhibitions

Female Nude on a Bed

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. 112, *Nude seated in bed*

Zurich, Kunsthaus Zürich, *Pont-Aven. Gauguin und sein Kreis in der Bretagne*, 5 March-11 April 1966, no. 126, *Sitzender Akt im Bett*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 10, *Female Nude Seated on a Bed*



Exhibitions

Lustfulness (Lubricité)

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960

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

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 8, *Lubrlicity*



Exhibitions

Women Bathing

London, Tate Gallery, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven group*, 7 January-13 February 1966, no. 112, *Group of Female Bathers*

Zurich, Kunsthaus Zürich, *Pont-Aven. Gauguin und sein Kreis in der Bretagne*, 5 March-11 April 1966, no. 127, *Gruppe badender Frauen*



Exhibitions

Cover of the series Au Bordel

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 12, *Title page*



Exhibitions

Look at the Trees Losing Their Coats, Even Though It's Not the Time to Let Them Go from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 13, *At the Brothel 1. A Prostitute Waiting by a Tree*

Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941. A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 12 May-5 August 1990, no. 96, *Im Bordell 1, Eine Prostituierte die an einem Baum wartet*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Emile Bernard*, 24 August-4 November 1990, no. 96, *Im Bordell 1, Eine Prostituierte die an einem Baum wartet*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Splendeurs et misères. Images de la prostitution, 1850-1910*, 22 September 2015-17 January 2016, no. 79, *V'la les arbres qui perdent leur p'lure c'est c'pendant pas l'moment d'la lacher*



Exhibitions

You See, It's Not the Men Who Frighten Me from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 15, *At the Brothel 3. Four Prostitutes in a Brothel*

Bremen, Kunsthalle Bremen, *Emile Bernard - Am Puls der Moderne*, 7 February-1 June 2015, no. 28, *Blatt 3 aus der Serie Im Bordell*



Exhibitions

What's New, Married Women Are Always Competing with Us from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 14, *At the Brothel 2. Three Prostitutes Around a Table*

Washington, National Gallery of Art, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, 20 March-12 June 2005, no. 237, *Three Prostitutes around a Table*

Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, 16 July-10 October 2005, no. 237, *Three Prostitutes around a Table*



Exhibitions

In the Garden from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 17, *Three Prostitutes in a Garden*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Splendeurs et misères. Images de la prostitution, 1850-1910*, 22 September 2015-17 January 2016, no. 82, *Au jardin*



Exhibitions

At Fifteen I Could Only Feel Disgust for Life, because I Had Lost All My Illusions from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 16, *At the Brothel 4. A Disillusioned Young Prostitute*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Splendeurs et misères. Images de la prostitution, 1850-1910*, 22 September 2015-17 January 2016, no. 81, *A quinze ans j'ai dû dégoûter de la vie parce que j'aurais perdu toutes mes illusions*



Exhibitions

The Ladies Are in the Salon from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 19, *At the Brothel 7. Three Prostitutes Seated*

Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941. A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 12 May-5 August 1990, no. 98, *Im Bordell 7. Drei sitzende Prostituierte*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Emile Bernard*, 24 August-4 November 1990, no. 98, *Im Bordell 7. Drei sitzende Prostituierte*

Washington, National Gallery of Art, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, 20 March-12 June 2005, no. 236, *Three Prostitutes Seated*

Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, 16 July-10 October 2005, no. 236, *Three Prostitutes Seated*

Bremen, Kunsthalle Bremen, *Emile Bernard - Am Puls der Moderne*, 7 February-1 June 2015, no. 19, *Blatt 7 aus der Serie Im Bordell*



Exhibitions

No One Can Pull a Man's Strings as Well as Me from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 18, *At the Brothel 6. Two Prostitutes at a Table*

Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941. A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 12 May-5 August 1990, no. 97, *Im Bordell 6. Zwei Prostituierte am Tisch*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Emile Bernard*, 24 August-4 November 1990, no. 97, *Im Bordell 6. Zwei Prostituierte am Tisch*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *De noodzaak tot schrijven*, 28 June-6 October 2002

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *De keuze van Vincent. Van Goghs Musée imaginaire*, 14 February-15 June 2003, no. 148, *At the Brothel: two prostitutes at table*

Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, 16 July-10 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, *Two Prostitutes at a Table*



Exhibitions

A Comb Has Teeth, but It Doesn't Eat from the series Au Bordel

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 21, *At the Brothel 9. A Prostitute Partly Undressed, Combing Her Hair*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Splendeurs et misères. Images de la prostitution, 1850-1910*, 22 September 2015-17 January 2016, no. 82, *Un peigne ça a des dents mais ça n'mange pas*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Lichte zeden. Prostitutie in de Franse kunst, 1850-1910*, 19 February-19 June 2016



Exhibitions

Tell Me When You're Ready from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 20, *At the Brothel 8. A Prostitute Standing in front of Her Bed*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Splendeurs et misères. Images de la prostitution, 1850-1910*, 22 September 2015-17 January 2016, no. 83, *Quand tu s'ras prêt tu l'diras*



Exhibitions

You Have to Finish Where You Start from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. BVG06079, p. 23, 17

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 23, *At the Brothel 11. A Prostitute Making Her Toilet*

Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941. A Pioneer of Modern Art*, 12 May-5 August 1990, no. 99, *Im Bordel 11. Eine Prostituierte, die sich wäscht*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, *Emile Bernard*, 24 August-4 November 1990, no. 99, *Im Bordel 11. Eine Prostituierte, die sich wäscht*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *De noodzaak tot schrijven*, 28 June-6 October 2002

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *De keuze van Vincent. Van Goghs Musée imaginaire*, 14 February-15 June 2003, no. 147, *At the brothel: a prostitute making her toilet*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Van Gogh aan het werk*, 1 May 2013-13 January 2014

Bremen, Kunsthalle Bremen, *Emile Bernard - Am Puls der Moderne*, 7 February-1 June 2015, no. 30, *Blatt 11 aus der Serie Im Bordell*



Exhibitions

This Is the Tomb of My Dreams from the series *Au Bordel*

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, February 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum, *Collectie Theo van Gogh*, April-May 1960, no. 12, *Au bordel (boekje met 11 aquarellen)*

Paris, Institut Néerlandais, *Les amis de Van Gogh*, 9 November-17 December 1960, no. 17, *Au bordel (livre de 11 aquarelles)*

New Brunswick, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941). The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, 3 April-31 May 1988, no. 22, *At the Brothel 10. A Prostitute and Her Client in Her Bedroom*

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, *Splendeurs et misères. Images de la prostitution, 1850-1910*, 22 September 2015-17 January 2016, no. 84, *V'la l'tombe de mes rêves*

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *Lichte zeden. Prostitutie in de Franse kunst, 1850-1910*, 19 February-19 June 2016, no. 88, *Dat is het graf van mijn dromen*

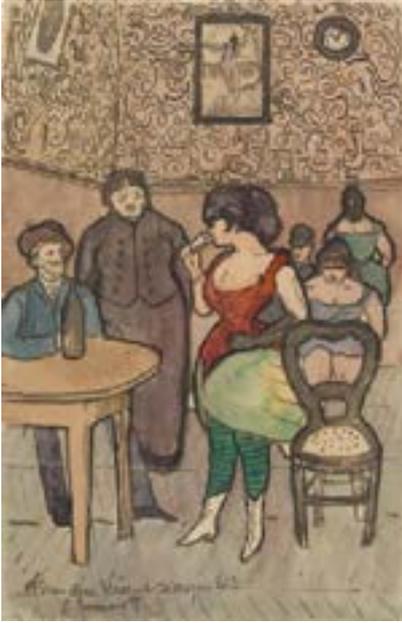


Literature

Paris

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- Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Emile Bernard (1868–1941): The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, exh. cat., New Brunswick, NJ (Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), New Brunswick, NJ 1988, no. 5, pp. 13, 15, 29
- Mary Anne Stevens (ed.), *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, p. 267
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- 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. 366
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- Fred Leeman, *Émile Bernard (1868–1941)*, Paris 2013, pp. 114, 118
- Dorothee Hansen et al., *Emile Bernard, 1868–1941*, exh. cat., Paris (Musée de l'Orangerie) 2014, no. 77, pp. 196–97

- Fiona Saint-Davis, 'Fleshing Out the Van Gogh Myth: Artistic Practice and the *Courrier français* Censorship Controversy of 1888', unpublished article, 2019, Van Gogh Museum Research Grant, p. 10



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Brothel Scene

- Mark Roskill, Van Gogh, *Gauguin and French Painting of the 1880s: A Catalogue Raisonné of Key Works*, Ann Arbor, MI 1970, p. 219
- Mark Roskill, Van Gogh, *Gauguin and the Impressionist Circle*, London 1970, p. 126
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- 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. 47, pp. 152-53, 184
- Douglas W. Druick, Peter Zegers and Britt Salvesen (eds.), *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South*, exh. cat., Chicago (Art Institute of Chicago) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Chicago 2001, pp. 123-24
- Marije Vellekoop and Roelie Zwikker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh: Drawings*, 4 vols., Amsterdam 1996-2007, vol. 4: *Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise, 1888-1890* (2007), no. 341h, pp. 132-34
- Marije Vellekoop, *Van Gogh aan het werk*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) Brussels 2013, no. 233, pp. 172-73

- Fiona Saint-Davis, 'Fleshing Out the Van Gogh Myth: Artistic Practice and the *Courrier français* Censorship Controversy of 1888', unpublished article, Van Gogh Museum Research Grant, pp. 10-11
- Mary Anne Stevens (ed.), *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, no. 94, p. 242
- Richard Thomson et al. (eds.), *Splendours and Miseries: Images of Prostitution in France, 1850-1910*, exh. cat., Paris (Musée d'Orsay) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Paris 2015, no. 78, pp. 162



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Female Nude Reclining on a Bed

- Mark Roskill, *Van Gogh, Gauguin and French Painting of the 1880s: A Catalogue Raisonné of Key Works*, Ann Arbor, MI 1970, pp. 219–20
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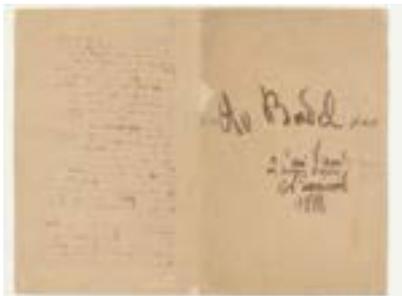
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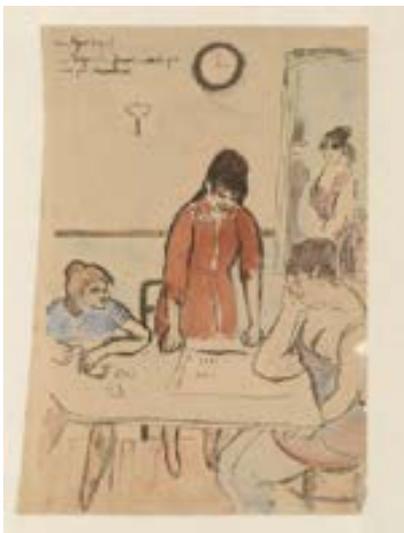


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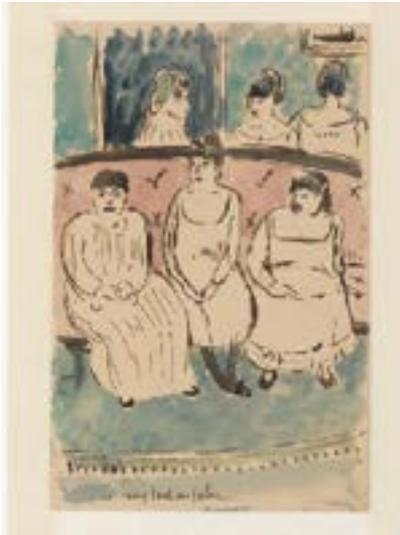


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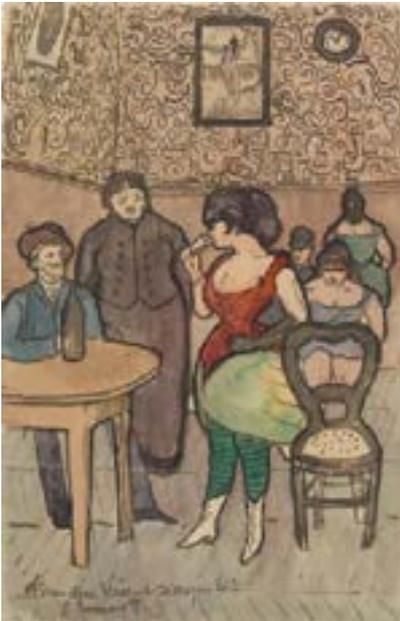
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Letters

Paris

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 1 May 1888, [↗ 602](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 22 May 1888, [↗ 612](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 86



Letters

Brothel Scene

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 19 June 1888, [↗ 628](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 23 June 1888, [↗ 630](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 26 June 1888, [↗ 632](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 27 June 1888, [↗ 633](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, c. 28 June 1888, [↗ 634](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 29 July 1888, [↗ 650](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, pp. 91, 113, 116



Letters

Female Nude Reclining on a Bed

- 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](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, pp. 99, 106



Letters

A Woman Washing Herself

- 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](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, pp. 99, 106



Letters

Female Nude on a Bed

- 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](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 106



Letters

Lustfulness (Lubricité)

- 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](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 106



Letters

Women Bathing

- 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](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 106



Letters

Sketches of Prostitutes

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 25 September 1888 [↗ 687](#)
- Vincent Van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, between 27 September and 1 October 1888 [↗ 690](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, 3 October 1888 [↗ 696](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 121



Letters

Cover of the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

Look at the Trees Losing Their Coats, Even Though It's Not the Time to Let Them Go from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

You See, It's Not the Men Who Frighten Me from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 ↗ [697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 ↗ [698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

What's New, Married Women Are Always Competing with Us from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 ↗ [697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 ↗ [698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

In the Garden from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

At Fifteen I Could Only Feel Disgust for Life, because I Had Lost All My Illusions from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent Willem van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

The Ladies Are in the Salon from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

No One Can Pull a Man's Strings as Well as Me from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

A Comb Has Teeth, but It Doesn't Eat from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

Tell Me When You're Ready from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

You Have to Finish Where You Start from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letters

This Is the Tomb of My Dreams from the series Au Bordel

- Vincent van Gogh, Letter to Theo van Gogh, Arles, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ 697](#)
- Vincent van Gogh, Letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, c. 5 October 1888 [↗ 698](#)
- Emile Bernard (ed.), *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard*, Paris 1911, p. 131
- Vincent van Gogh, Letter to Johan van Gogh, Amsterdam, 3 July 1951, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Figures

**Fig.1**

Vincent van Gogh, *Reclining Nude*, 1887, oil on canvas, 23.8 × 40.9 cm, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo. Photo: Rik Klein Gotink

Fig. 2

Vincent van Gogh, *Reclining Nude Seen from the Back*, 1887, oil on canvas, 38 × 61 cm, private collection

Fig. 3

Emile Bernard, *The Dive (Le bouge)*, c. 1885, pen and ink and watercolour mounted on wove paper, 20.3 × 10.9 cm, collection Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Museum Purchase. Edward and Lois Grayson Art Purchase Fund. Photo: Peter Jacobs

Fig. 4

Louis Anquetin, *Le Mirliton*, 1886, oil on canvas, 145 × 157 cm, private collection

Fig. 5

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Artilleryman and Woman*, 1886, oil on tracing paper, 56 × 46 cm, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi

Fig. 6

Ferdinand Lunel, *At the Masked Ball of the Opera (Au bal masqué de l'Opéra)*, cover of *Le Courrier français*, 23 January 1887, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Photo: BnF

Fig. 7

Jean-Louis Forain, *...?...!!!.....*, cover of *Le Courrier français*, 22 April 1888, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Photo: BnF

Fig. 8

Vincent van Gogh, *Nude Woman Squatting over a Basin*, 1887, pencil on paper, 21.4 cm × 13.6 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Fig. 9

Vincent van Gogh, *Woman Walking Her Dog ('A La Villette')*, 1886, pencil, pen and ink, chalk, on paper, 16.8 cm × 10.1 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

**Fig. 10**

Emile Bernard, *Lesbos*, sketch from the album *A Painter's Childhood (L'enfance d'un peintre)* (p. 104), c. 1887, pen and ink on paper, Kunsthalle Bremen - Der Kunstverein in Bremen

Fig. 11

Emile Bernard, *Interior of a Brothel (Intérieur de bordel)*, oil on canvas, 57 × 74 cm, private collection

Fig. 12

Vincent van Gogh, *The Zouave*, 1888, reed pen and brown ink, wax crayon, watercolour and pencil on paper, 31.5 × 32.6 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 13

Verso of *Brothel Scene*

Fig. 14

Emile Bernard, *The Hour of the Flesh (L'heure de la viande)*, 1886, pastel and gouache on paper, 125 × 170 cm, private collection

Fig. 16

Emile Bernard, two sketches of a woman squatting, from the album *A Painter's Childhood (A L'enfance d'un peintre)* (p. 102), Kunsthalle Bremen – Der Kunstverein in Bremen



Fig. 17

Vincent van Gogh, *The Brothel (Le Lupanar)*, 1888, oil on canvas, 33 × 41 cm, The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia

Footnotes

- 01 This was probably part of a major exchange of works between the two friends. 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. 366.
- 02 Of great importance for this was Charles Baudelaire's essay 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', first published in *Le Figaro* (26 November, 29 November, 3 December 1863).
- 03 The first drawings that Bernard sent to Van Gogh, in March or early April 1888, have not survived. Van Gogh already thanked Bernard around 12 April 1888 for his sketches: 'croquis of your decoration' ('croquis y-inclus de ta décoration'). These sketches are unknown. See Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, around 12 April 1888 [↗ \[596\]](#).
- 04 On 15 July 1888, Van Gogh sent Bernard six drawings after paintings, and between 17 and 20 July another nine drawings. See [↗ \[642\]](#) and [↗ \[643\]](#).
- 05 The brothel drawing *The Dive (Le bouge, c. 1885)* is in the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, NJ. The album *A Painter's Childhood (L'enfance d'un peintre)* (Kunsthalle Bremen) also contains a brothel drawing dated 1885.
- 06 Emile Bernard, 'Des relations d'Émile Bernard avec Toulouse-Lautrec', published posthumously in *Art Documents* (March 1952), in Anne Rivière (ed.), *Émile Bernard, propos sur l'art*, 2 vols., Paris 1994, vol. 1, p. 316.
- 07 See Richard Thomson, 'Ambiguity, Allure and Uncertainty', in Richard Thomson et al. (eds.), *Splendours and Miseries: Images of Prostitution in France, 1850-1910*, exh. cat., Paris (Musée d'Orsay) / Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum), Paris 2015, pp. 80-97.
- 08 See Fiona Saint-Davis, 'Fleshing Out the Van Gogh Myth: Artistic Practice and the *Courrier français* Censorship Controversy of 1888', unpublished article, 2019, Van Gogh Museum Research Grant.
- 09 H. Hazel Hahn, *Scenes of Parisian Modernity: Culture and Consumption in the Nineteenth Century*, New York 2009, pp. 205-17.
- 10 Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, *Prints in Paris: From Elite to the Street*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 2017, p. 63.
- 11 See Emile Bernard, 'Des relations d'Émile Bernard avec Toulouse-Lautrec', *Art Documents* (March 1952), in Rivière, vol. 1, pp. 315-18, esp. 316: 'He [Toulouse-Lautrec] [...] took me to Bruant's. [...] Through Anquetin and Lautrec I caught a glimpse of the Parisian vice that I had divined from the songs and the crudeness of the [Cormon] atelier' ('Il [Toulouse-Lautrec] [...] me conduisit chez Bruant. [...] Par Anquetin et Lautrec j'aperçus le vice parisien que les chansons et les grossièretés de l'atelier [Cormon] me fait deviner').
- 12 See Mireille Dottin-Orsini and Daniel Grojnowski, 'Those Women They Call "Girls"', in Richard Thomson et al. 2015, pp. 46-67.
- 13 Marije Vellekoop and Roelie Zwikker (eds.), *Vincent van Gogh: Drawings*, 4 vols., Amsterdam 1996-2007, (2001), pp. 107-8.

- 14 'Lesbos' was supposed to be published in Charles Baudelaire's second, expanded volume of *Les fleurs du mal*, but ended up being censored by the French authorities. It was ultimately published in Brussels in 1866, along with other earlier censored poems, as no. II in volume called *Les Épaves* (The Scraps).
- 15 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 12 April 1888 [↗ \[596\]](#): 'I sometimes regret that I can't decide to work more at home and from the imagination. [...] But how to arrive at that unless I decide to work at home and from the imagination? This, then, to criticize myself and to praise you.' ('Je regrette parfois de ne pas pouvoir me résoudre à travailler davantage chez moi et de fantaisie. (...) Comment pourtant y arriver à moins de me résoudre à travailler chez moi et d'imagination.- Ceci donc à ma critique et à ta louange.')
- 16 See Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, letter to Emile Bernard, 1 or 2 November 1888 [↗ \[716\]](#): 'Now something that will interest you - we've made some excursions in the brothels, and it's likely that we'll eventually go there often to work' ('Maintenant ce qui t'intéressera - nous avons fait quelques excursions dans les bordels et il est probable que nous finirons par aller souvent travailler là').
- 17 Emile Bernard, letter to his parents, Saint-Briac, 26 April 1888, in Neil McWilliam (ed.), *Émile Bernard: les lettres d'un artiste (1884-1941)*, Dijon 2012, no. 28, pp. 74-75: 'I've been fully installed since yesterday morning' (Je suis installé complètement depuis hier matin'). On 1 May 1888, Vincent informed Theo that he had received a sketch from Bernard [↗ \[602\]](#).
- 18 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 23 June 1888 [↗ \[630\]](#): 'Today he sends me a croquis of a brothel' ('il m'envoie aujourd'hui un croquis de bordel').
- 19 Andreas Blühm and Louise Lippincott, *Licht! Het industriële tijdperk 1750-1900: Kunst en wetenschap, technologie en samenleving*, exh. cat., Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) / Pittsburgh (Carnegie Museum of Art) 2000, p. 212.
- 20 Fred Leeman, *Émile Bernard (1868-1941)*, Paris 2013, p. 118. Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 23 June 1888 [↗ \[630\]](#): 'On the back of the drawing there's a poem with very much the same tone as the drawing, it's likely that he has a more finished painted study of it' ('Derrière le dessin il y a une poésie qui est bien dans le même ton que le dessin, il est probable qu'il en a une étude peinte plus faite').
- 21 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.
- 22 With thanks to Nico Lingbeek, paper conservator at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, 11 November 2021.
- 23 Marije Vellekoop and Roelie Zwikker, *Vincent van Gogh: Drawings*, 4 vols., Amsterdam 1996-2007, (2007), p. 3.
- 24 For 'really pretty': Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, around 22 May 1888 [↗ \[612\]](#): 'The croquis of the woman in the last letter but one is really pretty' ('Le croquis de femme dans l'avant-dernière lettre est bien joli'). For 'the CROQUIS': Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 26 June 1888 [↗ \[632\]](#): 'the CROQUIS IS VERY VERY INTERESTING and I do thank you for it' ('le CROQUIS EST TRES TRES INTERESSANT et je t'en remercie bien').

- 25 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 23 June 1888 ↗ [630]: ‘Today he [Bernard] sends me a croquis of a brothel that I’m sending you enclosed herewith to pin up next to the acrobats by him that you have’ (‘Il [Bernard] m’envoie aujourd’hui un croquis de bordel que je t’envoie ci-inclus pour l’accrocher à côté des saltimbanques que tu as de lui’). Bernard dedicated *The Acrobats (Les saltimbanques)* (Luthi 81) to Van Gogh, but it did not remain in the Van Gogh family collection and is now in the Museo de Bellas Artes Juan Manuel Blanes in Montevideo.
- 26 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 27 June 1888 ↗ [633]: ‘I’ve sent your drawing of the brothel to my brother, and I’ve asked him to buy something of yours’ (‘J’ai envoyé ton dessin du bordel à mon frère et j’ai sollicité de te faire un achat’).
- 27 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 26 June 1888 ↗ [632]: ‘for my part I’ll send you a drawing one of these days’ (‘je t’enverrai de ces jours ci un dessin de mon côté’).
- 28 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 27 June 1888 ↗ [633]: ‘Si à nous deux nous exécutions un bordel je suis sûr que comme caractère nous y employerions l’étude du zouave.’
- 29 The letters Bernard sent to his parents in Brittany in 1887 often contained poetry. See: Emile Bernard, letter to his parents, 25 May 1887, in Laure Harscoët-Maire, ‘Lettres d’Émile Bernard (1887): De Cancale à Saint-Briac’, *Le pays de Dinan* 17 (1997), pp. 140-141.
- 30 The sheet on which Bernard wrote the poem for Paris has not survived, but a copy of it was published in Emile Bernard, *Lettres de Vincent van Gogh à Emile Bernard (Préface)*, Paris 1911, pp. 84-85.
- 31 Regarding the sex worker, Baudelaire wrote: ‘She is the very embodiment of savagery in civilization. Her beauty comes from Evil, always devoid of spirituality, but sometimes tinged with a melancholy fatigue’ (‘Elle représente bien la sauvagerie dans la civilisation. Elle a sa beauté qui lui vient du Mal, toujours dénuée de spiritualité, mais quelquefois teintée d’une fatigue qui joue la mélancolie’). See Charles Baudelaire, ‘Le peintre de la vie moderne’, in *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire*, Paris 1885, vol. 3, p. 107.
- 32 Emile Bernard, letter to his mother, around June 1894, cited in Leeman 2013, p. 46.
- 33 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, around 22 May 1888 ↗ [612]. The citation in full reads: ‘Listen, the sonnet about the women of the boulevard has some good things, but it isn’t there yet – the end’s banal. A “sublime” woman, I don’t know what you mean by that, nor do you in this case. Then “Hunting among the clan of old and young Those whom she’ll take to bed late at night.” Something like that – it’s not characteristic, because the women of our boulevard – le petit – usually sleep *alone* at night because they screw 5 or 6 times during the day or the evening and – late at night it’s that honourable carnivore, their pimp, who comes to collect them and take them home, yes, but he doesn’t sleep with them (only rarely). The worn-out and haggard woman usually goes to bed alone, and sleeps a leaden sleep. But with two or 3 lines redone, it’ll be there.’ (‘Ecoute, le sonnet des femmes du boulevard a du bon mais n’y est pas – la fin est banale. une femme “sublime”, je ne sais pas ce que tu entends par là ni toi non plus dans ce cas. Ensuite “dans le clan des vieux et des jeunes maraude Ceux qu’elle emmenera coucher le soir très tard.” quelque chose comme ça – c’est pas caractéristique car les femmes de notre boulevard – du petit – d’habitude couchent *seules* la nuit car elles tirent 5 ou 6 coups dans la journée ou le soir et – très tard c’est cet honorable carnivore, leur maquereau, qui vient les chercher et les reconduire, oui, mais il ne couche pas avec (que rarement). la femme éreintée et defaite se couche seule d’habitude et dort d’un sommeil de plomb. Mais avec deux ou 3 lignes de refaites cela y sera.’)

- 34 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 27 June 1888 [↗ \[633\]](#): ‘*Constater des faits* comme tu commences à le faire c’est donner des coups de bistouri de chirurgien qui explique une anatomie. j’écoute recueilli et intéressé, je regarde mais si après le chirurgien anatomiste va me faire de la morale comme ça, je trouve que cette dernière tirade n’a pas la même valeur que la démonstration anatomique. étudier, analyser la société, cela dit toujours plus que moraliser.’
- 35 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, around 5 August 1888 [↗ \[655\]](#): ‘La putain soumise en question a davantage ma sympathie que ma compassion. Etre exilé, rebut de la société, certes comme moi et toi artistes le sommes, “rebut” aussi, elle est certes notre amie & soeur conséquemment. Et y trouvant – dans cette position – de rebut – de même que nous – une indépendance qui n’est pas sans avoir ses avantages – tout bien considéré – ne nous trompons donc pas de point de vue en croyant la servir par une réhabilitation sociale d’ailleurs peu praticable et qui lui serait funeste.’
- 36 See Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[650\]](#).
- 37 With thanks to Nico Lingbeek, paper conservator at the Van Gogh Museum, 11 November 2021.
- 38 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[649\]](#): ‘then the four drawings of nude women, especially the one washing herself, a grey effect embellished with black, white, yellow, brown. It’s charming’ (‘puis les quatre dessins de femmes nues, surtout celle qui se lave, un effet gris agrémenté de noir, blanc, jaune, brun. C’est charmant’).
- 39 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[650\]](#): ‘But there’s a woman washing herself, very Rembrandtesque, or in the style of Goya and a very strange landscape with figures’ (‘Mais il y a une femme qui se laves bien rembrandtesque ou à la Goya et un paysage avec figures tres étranger’).
- 40 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 30 July 1888 [↗ \[651\]](#): ‘Get into your head the no less great and universal master portrait painter of the Dutch Republic, Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, a broad and naturalistic and healthy man’ (‘Fourre toi dans la tete le non moins grand et universel maitre peintre de portraits de la republique Hollandaise, Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, homme large et naturaliste et sain’).
- 41 Regarding nudity, Van Gogh’s statement about an etching after Rembrandt’s Christ tied to the column is relevant: ‘I’ve just found and bought here a little etching after Rembrandt, a study of a nude man, realistic and simple; he’s standing, leaning against a door or column in a dark interior. A ray of light from above skims his down-turned face and the bushy red hair. You’d think it a Degas for the body, true and felt in its animality.’ (‘Je viens de trouver et d’acheter ici une petite eau forte d’après Rembrandt, une étude d’homme nu réaliste et simple, il est debout appuyé contre une porte ou colonne dans intérieur sombre. Un rayon d’en haut frise la figure baissée et les grands cheveux roux. On dirait un de Gas pour le corps vrai et senti dans son animalité.’) Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[649\]](#).
- 42 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 10 October 1885 [↗ \[534\]](#): ‘but that Jewish bride – not reckoned so much – what an intimate, what an infinitely sympathetic painting’ (‘doch die jodenbruid – niet zoo geteld – wat een intiem, wat een oneindig sympathiek schilderij’).
- 43 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 14 December 1885, [↗ \[547\]](#): ‘*De la rivière*, an Amsterdam undertaker after the funeral – very fine in the blacks, a Goya-like conception – that tiny little painting was masterly’ (‘*la Rivière*, een Amsterdamsch bidder na de begrafenis – zeer mooi in de zwarten, een Goya-achtige opvatting’).

- 44 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 30 July 1888 [↗ \[651\]](#): 'Ik vind je tekening Lubricité niet zo mooi als de andere.'
- 45 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[650\]](#): 'un paysage avec figures tres étranger'.
- 46 Ibid.: 'il y en a 3 qui sont à la Redon, enthousiasme qu'il a pour cela que moi je ne partage pas trop.'
- 47 The third is difficult to identify.
- 48 See Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, 'Emile Bernard and the Hour of the Flesh', in Philip Dennis Cate, ed., *Emile Bernard (1868-1941): The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, exh. cat., New Brunswick, NJ (Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum) 1988, p. 14.
- 49 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 29 July 1888 [↗ \[650\]](#): 'He expressly forbids me to send them to you, but you'll receive them by the same post' ('Il me défend expressément de te les envoyer, seulement tu les recevra par même poste').
- 50 With thanks to Nico Lingbeek, paper conservator at the Van Gogh Museum, 22 October 2021.
- 51 See Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 4 or 5 October 1888 [↗ \[698\]](#).
- 52 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 3 October 1888 [↗ \[696\]](#): 'But for yourself, give me something fairly worked up' ('Mais pour toi donne moi une chose un peu travaillée').
- 53 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 5 October 1888 [↗ \[698\]](#): 'Bravo! The woman washing herself and the one who says "I'm second to none when it comes to taking it out of a man" are the best, it seems to me' ('Bravo. La femme qui se lave et celle qui dit - "il n'y en a pas deux comme moi pour travailler un homme" à ce qui me paraît sont les meilleures').
- 54 Ibid.: 'trop flous, trop peu chair et os suffisamment bâtis'.
- 55 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Emile Bernard, 5 October 1888 [↗ \[698\]](#): 'C'est égal, c'est déjà du tout neuf et de l'intéressant, que le reste aussi - au bordel - oui c'est ça qu'il faut faire.'
- 56 Vincent van Gogh, letter to Theo van Gogh, 10 October 1888 [↗ \[700\]](#): 'I'm doing a study of a brothel for Bernard, from memory' ('Je fais de tête une étude de bordel pour Bernard').