

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
April 1987

GAUGUIN AND HIS CIRCLE IN BRITTANY: THE PRINTS OF THE PONT-AVEN SCHOOL

May 22 - July 26, 1987

A collection of rare prints by prominent members of the late nineteenth-century Pont-Aven Circle in France opens at The Museum of Modern Art on May 22, 1987. GAUGUIN AND HIS CIRCLE IN BRITTANY: THE PRINTS OF THE PONT-AVEN SCHOOL features works by Paul Gauguin, Emile Bernard, Paul Sérusier, Armand Seguin, Roderic O'Conor, Cuno Amiet, Henri Delavallée, and Maxime Maufra.

The exhibition has been organized and circulated under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). The curator of the exhibition is Dr. Caroline Boyle-Turner, former professor of art history at the American College in Paris and currently guest curator at the Rijksmuseum Vincent Van Gogh in Amsterdam. The New York showing, made possible through the generosity of Lionel Epstein and sons Richard and Miles, has been coordinated by Audrey Isselbacher, assistant curator in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at The Museum of Modern Art.

The exhibition includes eighty-five zincographs, etchings, lithographs, and woodcuts (many handcolored by the artists) assembled over the course of thirty years by collector Samuel Josefowitz. For this presentation only, the collector has also lent a major monotype by Gauguin depicting three peasant women reciting the Angelus prayer. Six additional zincographs by Gauguin have been borrowed from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

- more -

GAUGUIN AND HIS CIRCLE IN BRITTANY is the first exhibition in North America to focus on the prints of the Pont-Aven artists, a group active between 1888 and 1895 in Brittany and Paris. The "Pont-Aven" school took its name from the small village located on the southern coast of Brittany in France. Long before Gauguin went there in 1886, the area was a popular summer retreat for artists. Few scholars are familiar with the highly original printmaking activities of this group, who experimented widely, incorporating the stylistic advances of Gauguin and Bernard with their own enchanted responses to the people and landscape of Brittany.

In 1889 Gauguin and Bernard each exhibited albums of zincographs inspired by the daily life of the Bretons in the Café Volpini at the Paris Universal Exposition. It was the artists' first occasion to present to the public their work in the Synthetist mode which stressed surface patterns and rhythms created by repetitions of forms and colors, "arabesques," and simplification of details, as opposed to purely realistic depictions. Although commercially unsuccessful, the exhibition greatly influenced a number of artists, many of whom sought similar inspiration along the Brittany coast.

The catalog, written by Boyle-Turner with a foreword by Douglas Druick, Prince Trust Curator of Prints and Drawings, Art Institute of Chicago, and published by the Smithsonian Institution, is the first in-depth study of the printmaking activities of the Pont-Aven Group. Each print in the exhibition is reproduced in the catalog, which contains approximately 144 pages with color plates and black-and-white illustrations. It is available in The Museum Store for \$17.50.

* * *

No. 41

For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.