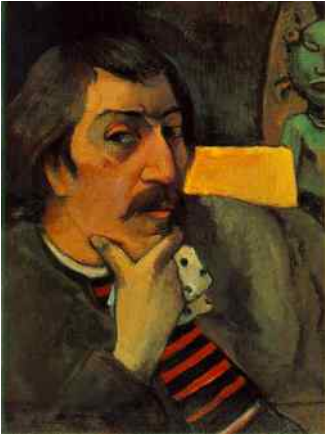


Gauguin the Legend, his life in the South Seas

“In order to produce something new, you have to return to the original source, to the childhood of mankind.”



In late July 1890 Gauguin learnt of van Gogh's death. In October Theo van Gogh died and he lost his most supportive dealer. He had long conceived the project of making Tahiti his next artistic destination, so now was the time to realise it. The *Self Portrait With an Idol* dating from c.1893 shows him in reflective mood.

Born in Paris, Gauguin spent his early childhood in Lima, Peru. This formative experience would lead him to shape an image of himself as a “savage,” a self-identification reflecting his idealizing and derogatory view of the non-Western people and cultures by which he was influenced. It also inclined him to settle for extended periods in different parts of the world, most famously Tahiti.

A successful auction of paintings in Paris in February 1891, greatly helped by a flattering review from the novelist and critic, Octave Mirbeau, along with other events such as a banquet and a benefit concert organised by fellow artists, provided the necessary funds for his visit to Tahiti. In March he received government sponsorship, endorsed by Georges Clemenceau, 'to study and paint the customs and landscapes of Tahiti.'

In an interview in the paper L'Echo de Paris he said: “I am leaving in order to have peace and quiet, to be rid of the influence of civilisation.[and] everything that is artificial and conventional [and] to immerse myself in virgin nature, see no one but savages, live their life...”

After visiting his wife and children in Copenhagen, for what turned out to be the last time, Gauguin set sail for Tahiti, via New Zealand, on 1st April 1891, promising to return a rich man and make a fresh start. He arrived on the 9th June, and spent the first three months in Papeete. His long hair earned him the name 'Taata-vahine' or 'man-woman.' Initially he attempted to fit in. He cut his hair, bought a suit and hoped to make a living as a portrait painter. After three months he left Papeete for the remote village of Mataiea some 45 kilometres away and installed himself in a native-style bamboo hut, with his Anglo Tahitian mistress, who he later abandoned as too westernised. And he began a two year period of intense creativity.

In a letter to Mette in late June he wrote: “The Tahitian soil is becoming completely French and little by little the old order will disappear. Our missionaries had already introduced a good deal of protestant hypocrisy and wiped out some of the poetry, not to mention the pox which has attacked the whole race...”

Vahine no te tiare; Woman with a Flower (1891) is his first major Tahitian portrait, and his model was apparently so overcome at sitting for the artist that she insisted on wearing her Sunday best. The dress that she wears demonstrates the effects of European colonization on the native Tahitians. Women were gradually abandoning the traditional pareo in favour of the less revealing Westernised dresses which the Christian missionaries encouraged them to wear. Once again, the idyllic existence that Gauguin sought had already been corrupted by Western influences.



The painting is notable for the care with which it delineates Polynesian features. He sent the painting to his patron George-Daniel de Monfreid, who was to become Gauguin's devoted champion of his Tahitian works. By late summer 1892 this painting was being displayed at Goupil's gallery in Paris. Art historian Nancy Mowll Mathews believes that Gauguin's encounter with exotic sensuality in Tahiti, so evident in the painting, was by far the most important aspect of his sojourn there.



Upon arrival, he found that Tahiti was not as he imagined it: it had been colonised in the 18th century, and at least two-thirds of the indigenous people of the island had been killed by diseases brought by Europeans. The "Primitive" culture had been wiped out.

The two women in *Tahitian Women on the Beach* (1891) are shown relaxing on a beach. They have somewhat melancholic expressions. The one facing the viewer is engaged in weaving a basket. She is fully clothed a result of the influence of the Christian missionaries, while the other is wearing the traditional paréo, a piece of cloth which can be wrapped around in a variety of ways. She is also wearing a white blouse. Before colonisation the women

would have been bare breasted, or wrapped the paréo higher around their bodies.

Tahitian Landscape (1891), one of the first pictures he painted in the South Seas, exhibits the artist's characteristic Post-Impressionist style. Gauguin used sinuous contours and intense colours to express the joy and serenity inspired by the lush tropical site. He once said of his Tahitian paintings that he had been "eager to suggest a luxurious and untamed nature, a tropical sun that sets aglow everything around it...the equivalent of the grandeur, depth, and mystery of Tahiti when it must be expressed in one square meter of canvas."

The lush heat saturated landscape is expressed in the heightened colours and clearly defined shapes that he derive from his first tropical sojourn in the Caribbean island of Martinique. The foreground is relatively empty, the path and the elongated palms take the viewer's eye up towards the mountain that dominates the background. In the middle of the painting Gauguin has captured the daily activities of island life. A man, wearing a hat, walks along the path with a load carried across his shoulders, while a lone dog looks across.



One of the earliest works completed in Tahiti, **Te Faaturuma; The Brooding Woman** (1891) depicts a woman and Polynesian interior in highly saturated, unnatural colours. The woman's pose, resting her chin on one hand, is often associated with the Impressionist artist Edgar Degas, who once owned this painting.

This picture, painted during the first of two extended stays there, shows Gauguin's rejection of naturalism for stronger, unreal colour and striking simplification of form, all of which had a strong influence on modern art of the early twentieth century. The silent and meditative woman conveys the sense of mystery that the Polynesians evoked in the artist.

In the background is a horseman and a collarless dog. The frequency of dogs in Gauguin's pictures is the source of speculation as to the significance, symbolic or otherwise.

Although a relatively straightforward genre scene **Fatata te Miti; By the Sea** (1892) is far from a straightforward representation of what Gauguin actually saw; the painting transforms the mundane and ordinary into an exoticised view of the island's life.

Two Tahitian women, seen from behind, jump into the sea; in the background is a fisherman with a spear. The painting epitomizes the romantic view of Tahitians made famous by Pierre Loti's *Le Mariage de Loti*, a novel in which Loti described his Tahitian bride's pursuits as extremely simple: "reverie, bathing, above all bathing". The women in the painting bathe naked, apparently unbothered by the presence of the fisherman nearby. This is an image of the uninhibited tropical paradise Gauguin had hoped to find, although the reality was that Polynesian culture had been transformed by western missionaries and colonialism as they imposed their own values and religion on the people living in the islands.



Gauguin uses intense tropical colours to convey sensual delight. For example, he uses pinks and purples for the sand, although in reality the beaches were a drab volcanic brown. Gauguin placed jigsaw puzzle shapes of complementary and adjacent shades side by side as binaries to suggest an intermediate, unpainted boundary reflecting his spiritual belief that binaries such as the moral and physical universe were reconcilable.

The theme of nymphs frolicking in the waves was a tradition of the Golden Age represented by artists from the Renaissance onwards.



Gauguin considered **La Oriana Maria (Ave Maria)** (March 1892) his best work since arriving in Tahiti a year earlier, describing it in a letter: "A yellow angel points out Mary and Jesus to two Tahitian women. Mary and Jesus are likewise Tahitians and naked, except for the paréo, a flowered cotton cloth tied to suit one's fancy. In the background very dark mountains and blossoming trees. Foreground emerald green. To the left bananas..."

In his paintings Gauguin created the world that he sought, rather than the one he encountered, interweaving the mythologies and imagery of the islands with that of the West and his own imagination.

He employed this same Symbolist vocabulary in Polynesia that he had in Brittany. He transforms a Christian subject into a tropical dream. Gauguin

derived the scene's unusual composition from a photograph of a bas-relief from the Javanese temple of Borobodur. Mary is depicted as a beautiful, Tahitian girl wearing a red print sarong with the Christ child, a naked, sturdy-looking toddler, sitting on her shoulder. Both have gold halos and Christ leans his cheek on his mother's head, looking directly at the viewer. The fruit at Mary's feet is laid out in a 'fata,' a platform used by the Polynesians to make offerings to the gods. Further back, two young girls, naked from the waist up, hold their hands in prayer as if worshipping. Beside them, partially obscured by tropical leaves and flowers, is an almost Botticelli-like angel with colourful wings and long black tresses who seems to act as their intercessor with the holy pair.

Gauguin had read full accounts of Tahiti's forgotten culture and religion. He was fascinated by the accounts of Arioi society, a secret religious order which venerated the war god 'Oro, whom they considered the founder of their order. The Arioi were guardians and promoters of tradition. In a society with no writing, it was important to openly preach, protect, and spread religious texts through constant recitation. Initiates of the Arioi lived in sexual freedom before marriage, which therefore was repulsive to the missionaries who arrived in the 19th century. After the establishment of a matrimonial bond, though, promiscuity stopped. By the time Gauguin arrived the cult had been suppressed.

Because the accounts he had read contained no illustrations, and the Tahitian models had in any case long disappeared, he could give free rein to his imagination. He executed some twenty paintings and a dozen woodcarvings over the next year. The first of these was **Te aa no areois; The Seed of the Areoi** (1892), representing 'Oro's terrestrial wife Vairaumati.

In March he wrote to Mette: "I am an artist and you are right, you're not mad. I am a great artist and I know it. It's because I know it that I have endured such sufferings. To have done otherwise I would have considered myself a brigand – which is what many people think I am....What do husbands generally do, especially stockbrokers? On Sundays they either go to the races, or to the café, or with whores..."

In a letter to Daniel de Monfreid (his friend and future biographer) he said: "I am now living the life of a savage, walking around naked except for the essentials that women don't like to see (or so they say.)"



Ancien Culte Mahorie (date unknown) was among a number of illustrated books that Gauguin produced as an account, somewhat fictionalised, of his life in Polynesia, and the picture he wished to paint of the culture and lifestyle that was fast disappearing. In this colourful page he depicts three women dressed only in a small, ragged cloth or possibly the traditional paréo, with bare breasts. One is carrying what maybe a small animal, or possibly a fruit. The book is now preserved in the Louvre and was published in facsimile form in 1951.

In *Diverses Choses* he stressed the importance of using colour as an imaginative equivalent rather than as a literal imitation of nature, explaining that 'pure' colour can "facilitate the flight of the imagination, decorating our dreams, opening a new door onto the infinite and the mysterious." He described colour, in synaesthetic terms, as "the language of the eye which listens", locating its highest expression in the art of the Orientals and Persians.

In a letter to de Monfreid he wrote: "I have just finished a severed head, nicely arranged on a white cushion, in a palace of my invention and guarded by women also of my invention". The death of Pōmare V the last Tahitian King not long after Gauguin's arrival, as well as Gauguin's witnessing of a public execution by guillotine several years earlier, are both thought to have informed the work. Gauguin would later write in *Noa Noa* that the death of the king seemed to him a metaphor for the disappearance of native Tahitian culture at the hands of Europeans. Pōmare V was pressured to abdicate and give Tahiti and its island dependencies to France in 1880, and later succumbed to alcoholism. He was not decapitated or put on similar public display.

In **Arii Matamoe; The Royal End** (1892) Gauguin achieves a tropical sensibility through a colour palette ranging from muted purples and browns to yellows, reds, and vivid pinks. The severed head, displayed on a low-lying table or serving platter, is decorously presented with only a hint of blood; a despairing nude woman crouches nearby, while a figure just outside the room seems to proclaim the man's death to people further away.

A Tiki-like figure stands by the door (Tiki is the Tahitian Adam). Gauguin combined motifs and imagery borrowed from Tahitian, Javanese, French and Peruvian sources, freely mixing Eastern and Western influences. By doing so he created a rich symbolic mélange which,



according to Gauguin scholar Elizabeth Childs, indicates that he was "interested in proving himself to a Parisian art market."



The Tahiti of Gauguin's depictions was derived from native folklore supplemented by material culled from books written by earlier European visitors and overlaid with allusions to western culture. The pose of the standing nude, for instance, is derived from a medieval statue of the biblical Eve and more distantly from the *Venus Pudica* of classical sculpture. The artist placed this rich combination of references to original sin, the loss of virginity, and occidental standards of beauty and art within the context of his Tahitian mythology and primitive, non-European aesthetics.

The meaning of the title *Parau na te Varua ino* is unclear. The phrase *varua ino*, evil spirit or devil, refers to the masked kneeling figure and *parau* means words, suggesting the interpretation "Words of the Devil." The meaning of many of Gauguin's Tahitian paintings remains elusive. There is little likelihood that Gauguin's original audience would have been able to interpret the Tahitian legends that Gauguin carefully inscribed on most of the 66 paintings he took back to Paris in 1892.

A number of interpretations have been attached to *Nafea Faa Ipoipo; When Will You Marry?* (1892) A traditionally dressed young woman sits in the foreground. Her facial features are stylized and simplified. Behind her left ear a white tiare flower indicates she is seeking a husband. Behind her a second figure in a high-necked Western-style dress sits erectly. Her gesture possibly derives from Buddhism; identified as a mudra denoting threatening or warning. At the bottom right is the inscription "NAFEA Faa ipoipo", (When will you marry?) Gauguin commonly inscribed his paintings in Tahitian at this time: he was fascinated by the language, though never advanced beyond its rudiments.

Art historian Nancy Mowell Mathews wrote that Gauguin "portrayed the [Tahitian] natives as living only to sing and to make love. That's how he got the money from his friends and raised the public's interest in his adventure. But, of course, he knew the truth, which was that Tahiti was an unremarkable island with an international, westernised community". A pencil sketch of the painting's central figure was uncovered and authenticated in a 2017 episode of *Fake or Fortune*.



Aha Oe Feii?; Are You Jealous? (1892) is based on a real-life episode which Gauguin later described in the diary *Noa Noa*: "On the shore two sisters are lying after bathing, in the graceful poses of resting animals; they speak of yesterday's love and tomorrow's conquests. The recollection causes them to quarrel, 'What? Are you jealous?'"

The painting evokes a sense of a Pacific paradise in which sexual relations are playful and harmless. According to Professor Peter Toohey, "this jealousy is not the product of a threat to an exclusive sexual relationship or jilted love affair - it is the result of one of the sisters having enjoyed more sex than the other the night before". In a letter to a friend from 1892, Gauguin wrote

about the painting: "I think this is the best of what I've made so far".

In a very 'untraditional' composition the two figures are pushed to the right hand two thirds of the picture. The seated figure looks to her left, directing the viewer's attention to, and out of, the right hand edge of the painting; her frontal torso and face in profile is reminiscent of Egyptian wall paintings, of which Gauguin was familiar. A strong diagonal cuts off the upper left corner, which is filled with a colourful arabesque of shapes, presumably to be read as reflections in the water. Gauguin skilfully binds the two figures together into a unified shape by the pattern of light and shade – a thin, grey bounding line divides the left sun-lit shoulder of the seated girl from the chest of her sister, and forms a curving echo of the breasts.

In *Noa Noa*, which Gauguin originally conceived as a commentary on his paintings, and description of his experiences in Tahiti, he revealed that he had taken a thirteen-year-old girl as native wife or *vahine* ("woman"), a marriage contracted with her family in the course of a single afternoon. This was Teha'mana, called Tehura in the travelogue, who was pregnant by him by the end of summer 1892. Modern critics have suggested that the contents of the book were in part fantasized and plagiarised.

Teha'mana, who he called Tehura, acted as his model and is the subject of a number of paintings and this portrait carved in wood circa 1891-1893.



By the standards of today Gauguin's action of taking a teenage girl as a 'wife' would be child abuse. However, it is helpful to see it in context of the times and culture of Tahiti of the day. It was common at that time for French *colonists* to take native wives. They were often underage children, their marriage being arranged by their family for reasons of status or financial advantage. The marriages were generally not legally binding. In traditional Tahitian society sex before marriage didn't attract the censure (and the hypocrisy associated with it) that was prevalent in nineteenth century European, Christian society. Girls were sexually active at a much earlier age. As far as we know Tehura was not unwilling to the marriage, and contracting marriage with a European gave her protection and her family status among the local people. The marriage provided him with a source of food; there was no trade in foodstuffs and offering food was regarded as an act of charity. Fruit was abundant and was gathered high in the mountains on a weekly basis; fish was abundant in the lagoons and pigs were hunted for meat. As a member of a Tahitian family he was given access to food which otherwise might have been difficult to come by. Having a *vahine* meant at least he had access to wild fruit and the fresh shrimp which she gathered, as well as her own family's extensive food stores.



Gauguin quoted Delaroche, an art critic, when he discussed this artwork, ***Te Nave Nave Fenua; This Delightful Land*** (1892), in his *Intimate Journals*: "Fantastical orchard. Its seducing plants stimulate sexual desire of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Her arm timidly extends trying to pick an evil flower. The monster Chimera flutters its red wing to graze her temple." The Tahitian Eve with unconstricted body symbolizes Gauguin's longing for the primitive. In contrast to traditional western nudes Gauguin's Tahitian Eve is broad shouldered with strong legs, enormous feet (with seven toes on the left foot) and pubic hair.

The model for ***Manao tupapau; Spirit of the Dead Watching*** is Gauguin's 13-year-old native "wife" Tehura, who one night, according to Gauguin, was lying in fear when he arrived home late: "immobile, naked,



lying face down-ward flat on the bed with the eyes inordinately large with fear [...] Might she not with my frightened face take me for one of the demons and spectres, one of the Tupapaus, with which the legends of her race people sleepless nights?." Gauguin said that the title may refer to either the girl imagining the ghost, or the ghost imagining her.

He had earlier in a Breton painting represented Eve as in fear of the snake, reinterpreting the traditional Christian theme of innocence before the fall. In a letter to Mette he says:

"Naturally many of the pictures will be incomprehensible and you're going to have work on your hands. So that you will understand, and be able to show off, as they say, I am going to give you an explanation of the most difficult one...I painted a nude of a young girl. In this position she is on the verge of being indecent. But I want it that way: the lines and movement are interesting to me. So when I do the head I put in a little bit of fear. For this fear I have to give a pretext, if not an explanation, and it has to be in keeping with the character of the person, a Maori girl. The Maoris have a very great, traditional fear of the spirit of the dead. A girl from our own part of the world would be afraid of being caught in that position (women here not at all). I have to explain this fright with the fewest possible literary devices...So this is what I do. Dark, sad terrifying harmony that rings in the eye like a funeral bell. Purple, dark blue and orangey yellow. I make the cloth greenish yellow...because it creates, suggests artificial light (a Kanaka woman never sleeps in the dark)...because this yellow linking the orangey yellow and the blue completes the musical chord. There are flowers in the background...I make them like sparks. The Kanake think that the phosphorescences of the night are the souls of the dead and they believe in this and are afraid...This little text will make you look very scholarly when the critics start to fire their mischievous questions at you."

He then needed to find a pretext for the girl's emotions. At first Gauguin made the old woman the subject of her fright, but later in his account in *Noa Noa* made himself the subject of her fear.

Gauguin began the notebook *Cahier por Aline* for his eldest daughter Aline, then sixteen years old, in 1893. The notebook includes a description of *Spirit of the Dead Watching*, under the title "Genesis of a picture", accompanied by a watercolour sketch. It is here that Gauguin remarked the title *Manao tupapau* can be understood in two ways (i.e. as "watching the spirit" and "the spirit watching").

The text reads: "To recapitulate: Musical part - undulating horizontal lines - harmonies in orange and blue linked by yellows and violets, from which they derive. The light and the greenish sparks. Literary part - the spirit of a living girl linked with the spirit of Death. Night and Day. This *genèse* is written for those who always have to know the whys and wherefores. Otherwise the picture is simply a study of a Polynesian nude."



Arearea I; Joyfulness I (1892) depicts two women seated against a succession of coloured planes – green, yellow, red – forming the structure of the composition. In the imaginary scene in the background, there are several women worshipping a statue. Gauguin has enlarged a small Maori statue to the size of a great Buddha, inventing a sacred rite. All these elements create an enchanted world, full of both harmony and melancholy, where man lives under the protection of the gods, in a luxuriant natural environment, in an archaic, idealised Polynesia.

The red dog, which appears in a number of his paintings, provoked sarcastic comments when the painting was shown at his exhibition in Paris by Durand-Ruel in 1893. It has been suggested that the collar-

less dog in his paintings is an alter-ego, representing his alternative, savage self. He named his dog in the Marquesas Pego, a play on his signature P.Go, and also slang for penis.

Arearea II; Joyfulness II (1892) is a design for a fan, which repeats the design of *Joyfulness I*, without the dog.

Gauguin said "Line is a means of accentuating an idea," and: "Have always before you the Persians, the Cambodians, and a little of the Egyptians." These statements show how far he had travelled from the Impressionists, for whom touches of undelineated colour served to create atmosphere and define form.

In the absence of any remaining native culture in Tahiti, Gauguin gradually began to create a convincing fiction of life in a tropical paradise from an eclectic range of sources. After reading Moerenhout's *Voyages aux Iles de Grand Ocean* (published in 1892), and from a wide selection of photographs and illustrations that he took with him to Tahiti, he constructed some notion of a mythical past. He imposed the cultures of so-called primitive peoples onto Tahitian subject matter in an attempt to make it look authentically 'savage'.



In **Ta Matete; We Shall Not Go to the Market Today** (1892) the poses of the figures derive from an Egyptian fresco painting on a Theban tomb that Gauguin had seen in the British Museum. In the work, he has retained the insistent frieze-like composition of his source, observing each of the women full-face or in rigid profile.

The work represents the prostitutes who frequented the market place in Papeete, in response to the demands of the colonial population. Gauguin's retention of the hieratic gestures of the original may be an ironic comment on the constrained sexuality of the native Tahitians, forced to pander to a Western audience.

Parahi te marae; The Sacred Mountain (1892) depicts a *marae*, or Tahitian sacred enclosure. The artist's title—*Parahi Te Marae (There Dwells the Temple)*—suggests that it represents an actual or at least a representative Polynesian religious

site, but the setting is instead a fanciful creation by Gauguin. At the time of his visit, most *marae* were in ruins, and he constructed this scene from diverse sources and objects. An idol similar to the monolithic statues, or *mo'ais*, of Easter Island, more than two thousand miles east of Tahiti, stands alone on a volcanic hill, while the fence enclosing the sacred space is decorated with skulls, alluding to the legend that children were sacrificed there, and fretwork patterns inspired by diminutive tooth and shell ear ornaments worn by Maori women on the Marquesas Islands, nearly nine hundred miles to the North-East. The unabashed appropriation of these objects for his own purposes is indicative of Gauguin's fascination with mystery and myth-making.



He wrote to Mette: "My artistic centre is in my head," And some years later he was still declaring: "I am not a painter who works from nature. With me, everything happens in my wild imagination."

In December 1892 he was writing to de Monfreid: "I have very little to tell you in this letter. I'm in a state of utter depression....When I think hard about it, I shall have to abandon painting when I return – I just can't make a living from it. I left Paris after a victory, a small one, but a victory all the same. In 18 months I've not received a penny from my painting..."

In March he wrote to de Monfreid that he had received 700 francs. Of the younger painters he said "...today, there's a whole pack of young people following in my footsteps, prospering even...I shall perhaps get squeezed out in the rush. I'm counting on this stay in Tahiti: it will be a change from the work I produced in Brittany and it will take them a little while to follow me along this new path..."



Hina tefatou; The Moon and the Earth (1893) is Gauguin's interpretation of an ancient Polynesian myth, in which Hina, the female spirit of the Moon, implores Fatou, the male spirit of the Earth, to grant humans eternal life. Fatou resolutely denies Hina's request. Gauguin's depiction of Hina and Fatou—marked by great disparity in their size, scale, and colouration—emphasizes their ancient quarrel. Hina stands nude in the foreground facing Fatou, who looms commandingly in the background. Her upraised arms suggest supplication, while his severe, stone-like face indicates that he remains unmoved by her entreaties. This dramatic scene takes place in a lush, dreamlike landscape setting.

Merahi metua no Tehamana; The Ancestors of Tehamana/Tehamana has Many Parents (1893) is a portrait of Teha'amana (her name signifies "giver of strength"), Gauguin's native wife. Although only thirteen years old, nevertheless, he did profess a tender love for Teha'amana in his journal *Noa Noa*. Pierre Loti's *Le Marriage de Loti* was an immensely popular account of

such a marriage twenty years earlier, although in that case the marriage was actually a fictional composite of many casual liaisons indulged by Loti during a two-month visit to Papeete.

When Gauguin returned to Tahiti in 1895, Teha'amana had married again.

The inscription below the idol reads "MERAH METUA NO | TEHAMANA", meaning "Teha'amana has many parents", a reference to Teha'amana possessing foster-parents as well as her natural parents in accordance with Tahitian custom (Gauguin had to negotiate with both sets of parents when arranging the marriage). The placement of the inscription below the idol may also emphasise the belief that all Tahitians descended from the union of the ancient deities Hina and Ta'aroa. Although Gauguin places a devotional idol behind her, nevertheless Teha'amana was a Christian, as evidenced by the missionary dress she wears in the portrait.



Charles Stuckey remarks that the two ripe mangoes, placed on a low table to Teha'amana's right, probably represented the bounty of Tahiti, if not Teha'amana's fertility herself. The idol is taken to be a representation of Hina, borrowed from Hindu sculptures presenting the life-giving gesture. As a counterfoil, the heads that hover above each of Teha'amana's shoulders are evil spirits, suggesting a dialogue between good and evil or between life and death.



In the ***Self Portrait in a Hat*** (1893) Gauguin positions himself turning as though caught in a moment as he crosses the room. He has a somewhat arrogant, self knowing expression. In the background is an abstract flash of yellow on green, and the painting the *Spirit of the Dead Watching*.

The hard edged diagonal flash of yellow behind his head is difficult to interpret in a realistic way; it might derive from a streak of sunlight in a darkened room, although it 'reads' as a pure piece of geometric abstraction. It serves to introduce movement and counteract the leftward leaning poise of the upper body.

In May he moved to Papeete and requested repatriation. By the end of July 1893, he had decided to leave Tahiti and he would never see Teha'amana or her child again even after returning to the island several years later.

In August he returned to Paris with four francs in his pocket. Convinced of the novelty of his Tahitian paintings he is anticipating a hero's welcome.

“By the combination of lines and colours, under the pretext of some motif taken from nature, I create symphonies and harmonies that represent nothing absolutely real in the ordinary sense of the word but are intended to give rise to thoughts as music does.”

In November he received a small inheritance from his uncle Isidore, in whose house he had stayed with his mother and sister on their return from Peru in 1855.

Later in the month, with the assistance of Degas, he mounted an exhibition of 41 Tahitian and 3 Brittany paintings and two sculptures at the Durand-Ruel gallery. Although not a commercial success Degas was impressed, bought several works and helped to promote him. The critical reception was largely positive with enthusiastic reviews, but resulting in few sales. The poet Mallarmé said: “It is extraordinary that anyone can put so much mystery into so much brightness.”

The exhibition made the greatest impression on the younger generation of artists, the group known as Les Nabis: Maurice Denis, Bonnard, Vuillard and Ker-Xavier Roussel.

Despite the moderate success of his November exhibition, he subsequently lost Durand-Ruel's patronage in circumstances that are not clear. The art historian Nancy Mathews characterises this as a tragedy for Gauguin's career. Amongst other things he lost the chance of an introduction to the American market.

He set up an apartment near to Montparnasse, frequented by artists. He painted the walls vibrant yellow to display his Tahitian paintings, and those of Cézanne and van Gogh remaining from his collection. He began to conduct a weekly salon, his Thursday evening gatherings of artists, musicians and writers. He affected an exotic *persona*, dressing in Polynesian costume and accompanied by his teenage model and mistress, "half Indian, half Malayan", known as Annah the Javanese, a mulatto whom he had found wandering in the street and who soothed his nostalgia for faraway lands and races.

Despite her exotic name, the 13-year-old Annah was in fact Singalese. It is generally assumed that this work, ***Annah the Javanese, The Child-woman Judith is not yet Breached*** (1893 or 1894), represents Annah with her pet monkey Taoa. The Tahitian inscription on the painting, which may be translated as 'the child-woman Judith is not yet breached', seems at first to have little relevance to the subject. It has been suggested that this refers to Judith Molard, the daughter of his friend William Molard, who was also 13 years old. Perhaps by depicting Annah with all the sangfroid of Manet's *Olympia* and referring to the sexually naive Judith in the title, he is poking fun at the constraints imposed by her bourgeois parents. They, of course, would not have understood the title.



In Paris he continued to paint pictures with a Tahitian theme. ***Arearea no varua ino he; Amusement of the Evil Spirit*** (1894) is painted with well defined shapes and flat areas of colour. The meaning is obscure: two women are taking their ease. A bright pink flamelike shape surges up from the bottom of the picture. In the background two figures, a man and a woman, are engaged in conversation, while a sculpture of a god oversees the scene.

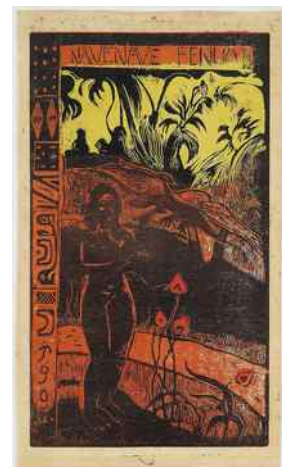
In ***Mahana no atua; Day of the God*** (1894) the figures are laid out in a frieze like pattern on an arrangement of coloured shapes, which by their juxtapositions suggest the landscape of a beach and mountains, with a hummock of sand and grass dividing the sea from an inlet with colourful shifting reflections. The statue of the god presides over this invented idyll.



After returning to Paris in 1893, he began working on *Noa Noa*, an illustrated book that explained and illustrated his experiences abroad, although the project was never completed. This woodcut print titled ***Maruru; Offerings of Gratitude*** (1894) is one of the illustrations. Gauguin depicted a lush landscape by chiseling roughly into a wood-block, a technique meant to suggest relief sculpture he viewed in Tahiti, emphasized by the irregularly applied ink in this example – one of only a few existing impressions.

Nave Nave Fenua; Delightful Land is a three colour woodcut from *Noa Noa*. The buff coloured paper would be first inked in yellow; then a block would be cut removing the parts that were to remain yellow and used to print the red. Then either a separate block would be cut for the black, or more likely, the block would be further cut into for the final black. The limitation of using the same block for the two colours is that the number of prints would then be limited to the original print run, and no further copies could be made.

Noa Noa is a fictionalised description of his attempt to understand and represent Tahiti. He wrote: "Everything in the landscape blinded me, dazzled me...In the brooks, forms of gold enchanted me – Why did I hesitate to pour that gold and all that rejoicing of the sunshine onto my canvas? Old habits of Europe probably, – all this timidity of expression of our bastardised races."





This imposing portrait is one of the last of Gauguin's French works. ***The Cellist Upaupa Schneklud*** was painted in the first months of 1894. The sitter, the cellist Frédéric-Guillaume Schneklud, was born in Paris in 1859. His family of German origin emigrated to Paris from Poland.

Its curious inscription, *Upaupa Schneklud*, on the canvas at top left, combines the sitter's surname with a reference to Gauguin's first Tahitian sojourn, "upaupa" being a traditional local dance in Tahiti, which Gauguin enjoyed during his first stay there.

By this time it had become clear that he and Mette were irrevocably separated. Although there had been hopes of a reconciliation, they had quickly quarrelled over money matters and neither visited the other. Gauguin initially refused to share any part of the 13,000-franc inheritance from his uncle Isidore which he had come into shortly after returning. Mette was eventually gifted 1,500 francs, but she was outraged and from that point on kept in contact with him only through Schuffenecker – doubly galling for Gauguin, as his friend thus knew the true extent of his betrayal.

Gauguin, as his friend thus knew the true extent of his betrayal.

In April 1894 he returned to Pont Aven accompanied by Annah and her pet monkey and parakeet. There Annah's behaviour and disdain scandalised the locals as he embraced his reputation as a rebel, drinking and fighting and bragging of his sexual conquests. His ankle was shattered in a brawl with local sailors. He wrote to William Molard (a neighbour from Paris, through whom he met Scandinavian artists and writers, including August Strindberg): "My leg is broken close to the ankle and the bone came right through the skin. Because of Anna, they threw stones at us in Concarneau. With two punches I knocked down a pilot who had attacked me. I took them all on, and kept the upper hand, until my foot caught in a hole and in falling broke my leg. Whilst I was on the ground they went on kicking me with their clogs, until at last I was extricated. I had to be carried to Pont-Aven, and am nursing my wounds." The wound, badly set by an incompetent doctor, was to cause him intermittent pain for the rest of his life.

The brushwork of ***The Farm in Brittany*** recalls Gauguin's earlier Impressionist pictures. The view is closer to reality, in as much as there is perspective, a conventional positioning of the various elements as they would appear naturally to the eye from a single viewpoint, and some sense of atmosphere, especially in the painting of a northern sky. It is as if he is retreating from the abstraction and myth making of his Tahitian paintings, this may have been a response to the reception and misunderstanding by the public, and a desire to make more saleable works. However, his palette, the brighter artificial colouring, does evoke his paintings from Tahiti.



Painted from the same viewpoint ***The Farm in Brittany II*** (1894) is more abstract in its construction of shapes, and in its colours, however there are elements referring back to his earlier Pont Aven paintings, such as the little dashes and flicks of brushwork.

Landscape in Brittany, Moulin David reveals the influence of his research in Tahiti. Here nothing moves, everything is stable, unified and definitive. The drawing, synthetically combining the verticals of the houses and trees in the foreground with the winding, undulating lines of the meadow, the stream and even of the fence, produces a mythical evocation of a primitive, Eden-like setting through this



Breton motif. The oblong shapes of the hill respond to the "mounds" of cloud, simplified like a child's drawing.

Across each of these distinct areas are layers of colour, both intense – bright green and emerald green, orange and cobalt blue – and very arbitrary in their imitation of the real. The brushwork is light, striated on the weave of a rough canvas, but does not produce any relief; no colour is shaded off to indicate a shadow, and there is nothing to suggest any variation in texture.

In the winter, recovering from his injury but sick of Brittany he returned to Paris, sending Annah on ahead with her pet parakeet, (the monkey had died) to make the apartment warm and ready for winter, only to find that she had ransacked his studio, taken all the money and valuables and disappeared. On his return writers and critics organised a banquet in his honour at Café des Variétés, and in December he held a small exhibition in his studio.



Paris in the Snow shows the view from the artist's window. Gauguin had recently moved to the second floor of a building in the Montparnasse area of Paris. We know from contemporary weather reports that it snowed on 24 February 1894, so he probably made the painting around that date. On the shop front in the background are the partially legible words 'Neufs Occasions' (New and Secondhand).

Gauguin's choice of subject is apparently casual. He has signed the picture in the shadow of the overhanging roof in the foreground. In spite of the snow this confection of shapes and colours has a warm, autumn feel about it.

Whether **Breton Village in the Snow** was a scene

drawn principally from Gauguin's imagination or was painted when the region experienced snowfalls during his stay, has been a matter of debate. The painting was found on an easel in his studio at Papeete at the time of his death on 8 May 1903. It was unsigned and undated, and it appears that he had taken the painting on his second trip to Tahiti with the idea of continuing to work on the canvas there.

There has been a long tradition in European art of snow-scapes, from medieval times onwards. The Impressionist group of painters, notably Monet, Sisley and Pissarro all favoured the subject as they sought to capture the effects of winter's snow on the landscape under changing light and different weather conditions. Gauguin continued this interest, creating several canvases of snowfalls, however, his interpretation of a snow scene is less transitory in appearance. Japanese woodblock prints by Hiroshige, in particular, were also influential; their strong contours, simplified shapes and flattened two dimensional space also provided a visual cue in the depiction of a landscape buried in snow.



Breton Village in the Snow is devoid of any narrative or human interest that might be found in the work of Gauguin's Impressionist contemporaries. Indeed, the artist's landscape of the Breton village scene set in the Lollichon field is without life—no villagers or farmer and no animals. X-radiography and infrared tests indicate that Gauguin painted out an animal in profile to the left of the foreground, and a human figure to the right.

Gauguin has produced in this painting a bleak landscape of bold forms and strong outlines set in an ice-chilled light. The artist has created heavy contours for the snow-covered thatched-roofed houses of the village, the central Gothic style church steeple and the stark appearance of the tree trunks in this barren landscape. The high horizon line, with the far-off view of smoking chimney stacks and wild clouds, all evoke a sense of drama and bitter cold in a barren winter. It is both austere and forsaken.



This enigmatic view of a winter night in Brittany, **Christmas Night (The Blessing of the Oxen)**, demonstrates Gauguin's ability to combine different sources of inspiration into one composition. The steeple and snow-covered cottages depict sites in Pont-Aven, yet the women wear the dark caps of the village, of Le Pouldu. The oxen are based on Egyptian tomb sculpture, while the figures in the shrine derive from photographs Gauguin owned of a frieze in Java.

Oviri (Tahitian for **savage** or **wild**) is an 1894 ceramic sculpture in partially glazed stoneware. Oviri is a shortened form of *Oviri-moe-aihere* (the savage who sleeps in the wild forest), in Tahitian mythology Oviri was the goddess of death and mourning and is shown with long pale hair and wild eyes, smothering a wolf with her feet while clutching

a cub in her arms. Art historians have presented multiple interpretations—usually that Gauguin intended it as an epithet to reinforce his self-image as a "civilised savage". The name itself fascinated Gauguin: savage, brutal, bloodthirsty. He used it, like a *nom de guerre*, to refer to himself, as though taking on the goddess's terrible aspects.

From wood-carvings and ceramics to highly finished marble works, sculpture was integral to Gauguin's artistic practice. His works in clay, all produced in Paris in the mid-80's to the mid-90's, owe much to the great ceramist Ernest Chaplet who offered Gauguin assistance in firing and glazing, as well as access to his kiln in Montparnasse. At 75 x 19 x 27 cm. *Oviri* was the largest and the last of these series.

He wrote: "The theme of *Oviri* is death, savagery, wildness. *Oviri* stands over a dead she-wolf, while crushing the life out of her cub." Perhaps, as Gauguin wrote to Odilon Redon, it is a matter of "not death in life but life in death".



In spring 1985 he submitted the *Oviri*, to the Société Nacional des Beaux-Arts *Salon* opening in April. There are conflicting versions of how it was received: his biographer and *Noa Noa* collaborator, the Symbolist poet Charles Morice, contended (1920) that the work was "literally expelled" from the exhibition, while Vollard said (1937) that the work was admitted only when Chaplet threatened to withdraw all his own work. In any case, Gauguin took the opportunity to increase his public exposure by writing an outraged letter on the state of modern ceramics to the newspaper *Le Soir*.

In 1900 he asked a friend to send it to him so that it could be put on his grave. Fortunately, his friend never got round to it, as the stoneware would not have weathered well in a tropical climate. In 1978, a bronze cast was made of the sculpture, which was placed before Gauguin's grave in the Marquesas.



Arearea no Varua Ino and ***Aha oe feii*** of 1894 are two watercolour monotypes with pen and red and black ink. In the absence of a press and standard printing facilities Gauguin fell back on the technique of monotype. This involves making a drawing in ink, or some fluid which does not dry too quickly, on a non absorbent surface: wood or metal for instance. Then placing a sheet of paper on top and exerting pressure in a simple nipping press, or by rubbing it over with a hard material, such as the back of a spoon. This means that only one print can generally be made;

or the residue of the ink on the plate can be freshened up or enhanced for a further unique print. Gauguin then further worked on the image with watercolour, pen and coloured inks.

Early in 1895 Gauguin was diagnosed with syphilis. In this photograph taken in Alphonse Mucha's studio at rue de la Grande-Chaumière, Paris, c. 1895, he is playing a harmonium.



In February 1895 he attempted an auction of his paintings at Hôtel Drouot in Paris, similar to the one of 1891, but this was not a success. The dealer Ambrose Vollard, however, showed his paintings at his gallery in March 1895, but they unfortunately did not come to terms at that date.

In an interview with *L'Écho de Paris* published on 15 March 1895, Gauguin explained that his developing technical approach was centred on a synaesthetic effect and interpretation. He stated: "Every feature in my paintings is carefully considered and calculated in advance. Just as in a musical composition, if you like. My simple object, which I take from daily life or from nature, is merely a pretext, which helps me by the means of a definite arrangement of lines and colours to create symphonies and harmonies. They have no counterparts at all in reality, in the vulgar sense of that word; they do not give direct expression to any idea, their only purpose is to stimulate the imagination—just as music does without the aid of ideas or pictures—simply by that mysterious affinity which exists between certain arrangements of colours and lines and our minds."

"I have come to an unalterable decision - to go and live forever in Polynesia. Then I can end my days in peace and freedom, without thoughts of tomorrow and this eternal struggle against idiots"



His disillusionment with the Paris art scene compounded by two attacks on him in the same issue of *Mercur de France*; one by his erstwhile friend and collaborator Émile Bernard, the other by the poet and critic Camille Mauclair. His isolation in Paris had become so bitter that he had no choice but to try to reclaim his place in Tahiti society.

In June 1895 the artist Eugene Carriere arranged a cheap passage back to Tahiti for him. He arrived, via New Zealand in September and never saw Europe again.

His time in Tahiti was divided between writing (political agitprop and articles for satirical journals) and major artworks. However, alternating with occasional sales he was also plagued by periods of financial crisis and ill health, and for the first year at least he produced no paintings, informing Monfreid that he proposed henceforth to concentrate on sculpture. Few of his wooden carvings from this period survive, most of them collected by Monfreid.

In a letter to William Molard, a friend from Brittany, he wrote: "Papeete, the capital of this Eden, Tahiti, is now lit with electricity. A merry-go round spoils the great lawn in front of the King's garden." In November 1895 he moved to Punaauia, three miles from Papeete. Plagued by ankle and syphilitic symptoms.

He built a spacious reed and thatch house at Puna'aula, in an affluent area ten miles east of Papeete, settled by wealthy families, in which he installed a large studio, sparing no expense and living with his new vahine, Pau'ura. Jules Agostini, an acquaintance of Gauguin's and an accomplished amateur photographer, photographed the house in 1896. Note the wooden sculpture of a nude woman in front.



He maintained a horse and trap, so was in a position to travel daily to Papeete to participate in the social life of the colony should he wish. He subscribed to the *Mercure de France* (indeed was a shareholder), by then France's foremost critical journal, and kept up an active correspondence with fellow artists, dealers, critics, and patrons in Paris.



Eiaha 'ohipa; Not working (1896) depicts two young Tahitians passing the time idling in a hut smoking – symbolising the relaxed, natural and contemplative lifestyle of the Tahiti islanders, whilst through the window the artist can be seen painting. The motif of an open window with the silhouette of a dog can be seen in other of Gauguin's works such as his *Te Faaturuma; The Brooding Woman* of 1891.

His health deteriorated and he was hospitalised several times for a variety of ailments. Then painful and debilitating sores that restricted his movement began erupting up and down his legs. These were treated with arsenic. Gauguin blamed the tropical climate and described the sores as "eczema", but his biographers agree this must have been the progress of syphilis.

In July he sent work with an officer who was leaving for France to de Monfreid saying in a letter, "They may be good; so much suffering and anguish have gone into them, and that may make up for the awkwardness of the execution..." In November Ambrose Vollard held an exhibition of Gauguin's work at his Gallery in Paris.

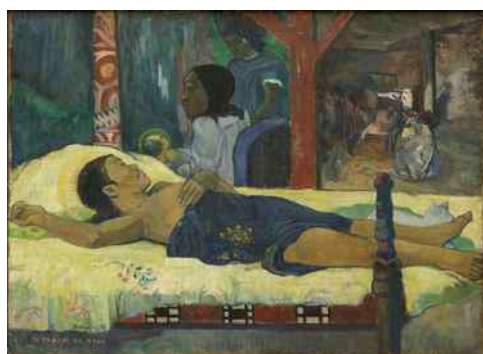
During his year in Papeete and thereafter, he played an increasing role in local politics, contributing abrasively to a local journal opposed to the colonial government, *Les Guêpes (The Wasps)*, that had recently been formed, and eventually edited his own monthly publication *Le Sourire: Journal sérieux (The Smile: A Serious Newspaper)*, later titled simply *Journal méchant (A Wicked Newspaper)*. A certain amount of artwork and woodcuts from his newspaper survive.

In the painting **Bé bé (Pēpe); The Nativity** (1896), Gauguin is re-interpreting the Nativity: a young Tahitian woman is seated in the foreground with a newborn child on her lap. A golden atmospheric halo surrounds the pair. The scene takes place in a barn with several cows. At the back of the composition is a bed with a woman who has given birth. Perhaps in a reference to pre-Renaissance altarpieces he is showing two episodes of the story in the same fragment of time. Behind the seated woman is a figure, an angel, with green wings; possibly a reference to Gabriel the angel of the Annunciation. However, the seated figure is not Mary, or the mother, she is similar to Tahitian representations of the spirit of the dead, as earlier depicted in *Manao Tupapau; the Spirit of the Dead Watches*. She thus hands the lifeless child to the angel next to her.



On Christmas Day 1896 Pau'ura gave birth to a daughter, who died only a few days after her birth, inflicting on Gauguin the trauma illustrated in the canvas.

Although halos surround the the heads of the mother and child, and other elements of the Nativity are present – and the painting bears the Tahitian name of *Te tamari no atua* ('Child of God') – **Te tamari no atua; The Birth** (1896) is more of a representation of a personal episode from the painter's life than of the birth of Christ. In this second version of the nativity the mother lying on the bed is brought to the fore, with the spirit with the dead child and the angel behind; making it more of a tender portrait of his young wife and thrusting the spiritual event into the background.



Gauguin was not particularly pious and in no way wished to Christianize the Tahitians. On the contrary, he had found his earthly paradise in Tahiti: a colony far enough from the Western civilization that horrified him.

In ***Te Arii Vahine; Wife of the King*** (1896), one of the most important canvases of his second Tahitian period, Gauguin engages openly with the European painting tradition. The beautiful Tahitian girl lies with a serene majesty amid fragrant vegetation. Her pose echoes the compositions of Manet's *Olympia* and Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, yet the similarity of plastic motifs merely emphasises the "synthetic" character of Gauguin's art, which combines several religious subjects, myths and visual images freely in the same work. Next to the beautiful girl, identified as the artist's Tahitian wife, he depicts the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and elders conversing together. The rich, vivid colours and complex compositional rhythms lend the picture an almost decorative resonance. "I don't think I've ever done anything with such a strong, impressive ring about it. The trees in blossom, the dog on guard, and the two doves cooing on the right. But what's the point in sending this canvas to Paris, when there are already so many others there unsold that have caused such a rumpus. This would produce an even bigger rumpus", Gauguin confessed in a letter to a friend in April 1896.



This image of *The King's Wife* epitomizes Gauguin's erotic fantasy of Tahiti. The young, naked Tahitian woman seems to become part of the fertile landscape, both of which the artist represents as beautifully seductive. The central figure in *Te Arii Vahine* reclines on a grassy hill alongside several brightly coloured ripe mangoes. There is a white cloth covering her groin, and she holds a large round fan behind her head. Her skin colour, mask-like facial features, and the setting in which she is placed clearly mark her as a native.



In ***Vase of Flowers*** (1896) exotic red bougainvillea and hibiscus, white and yellow frangipani, white tiare and large blue leaves burst out of a dark clay pot. They look as though they are slightly past their best, and some blossoms have fallen onto the table top. What seems to have interested Gauguin is the pattern of decorative shapes and the delicate interweaving of reds, creams and blues against the gold background rather than the horticultural detail.

Gauguin may have started this extravagant bouquet as a study of an actual floral arrangement but finished it from imagination, as it has the same dream-like quality as his Tahitian figure paintings. In 1899, when the dealer Ambroise Vollard asked Gauguin to send him some flower paintings for sale, the artist replied that he had "done only a few"

because "I do not copy nature – today even less than formerly. With me, everything happens in my exuberant imagination."

Te rerioa; The Dream (1897) depicts two women watching over a sleeping child in a room decorated with elaborate wood reliefs. The figures do not communicate, heightening the sense of mystery. Gauguin meant the subject to be unclear. He wrote, "Everything is a dream in this canvas: is it the child? is it the mother? is it the horseman on the path? or even is it the dream of the painter!!!" He inscribed the Tahitian word for *dream* in the lower part of the composition but misspelled it: it should read 'rereioa'.



In February 1897 six Tahitian paintings were exhibited in Brussels. Later that year he found out through de Monfreid and Morice, that far from not being able "to make ends meet", as she had constantly claimed, Mette had sold more pictures in Denmark, and that, helped by Schuffenecker, she was claiming as hers any new ones that arrived from Tahiti, writing to Schuff: "if then you able to send some of his pictures to me I shall try to sell them, and I certainly shan't send the money to Paul." At this time he was in constant pain and having to find money to pay for medical treatment, having refused to enter hospital "amongst the soldiers and the servants" with a paper marked 'Pauper'.

In April 1897, he received word from Mette that his favourite daughter Aline (named after his mother) had died from pneumonia, aged twenty. His book *Cahir por Aline*, was put together from drawings and reminiscences for Aline in 1894, unfortunately she died before she could receive it.

From *Cahir por Aline*: "...I have known what absolute poverty means - being hungry, being cold...and everything that it implies...it is true that suffering sharpens genius. Yet too much suffering kills you."

This was also the month he learned he had to vacate his house because its land had been sold. He took out a bank loan to build a much more extravagant wooden house with beautiful views of the mountains and sea. But he overextended himself in so doing, and by the end of the year faced the real prospect of his bank foreclosing on him. Failing health and pressing debts brought him to the brink of despair.



O Taiti; Nevermore (1897) is an enigmatic work depicting a naked Pau'ura, lying on a bed in their hut, her voluptuous figure echoed by the curves of the headboard. In the background behind the bed can be seen a raven and two mysterious human figures.

The title "Nevermore", painted in relatively large capitals in the top left-hand corner, and the presence of the raven is an obvious reference to Edgar Allan Poe's 1845 poem *The Raven*, which was well known to Gauguin and was recited at his farewell party in 1891; although in a letter to de Monfreid he said "...it is not

Edgar Poe's raven keeping watch, but the devil's bird." In the poem a mourning student is visited in his room by a raven which croaks the one word "nevermore" in response to his every question. At the time the painting was executed Pau'ura was grieving the loss of her first child (by Gauguin) and Gauguin the loss of his favourite European-born daughter Aline. The artist himself claimed the bird represented a "bird of the devil who watches".

The painting was purchased by the British composer Frederick Delius from George-Daniel de Monfreid for 500 francs in 1898. In 2010, it was voted in a poll Britain's *most romantic* painting.

Vairumati (1897) is a Tahitian goddess known as the original mother of the island, the mythical Eve from whom all the Maohi people descended. In this painting, Gauguin depicted the Tahitian goddess as a young bare-chested woman. She is seated on what appears to be a couch or bed with an elaborate, ornamental headboard.

On the left is a bird clutching a lizard. In Tahiti, this is a symbol of the ever-recurring life cycle which, according to Gauguin, would represent the uselessness of vain words. In the background are two bare-chested women. One seems to be raising her arms in a Buddhist mudra. The red colour filling most of the ground area increases the sense of enigma.



In November 1897 *Noa Noa* was published.



In December 1897 he contemplated suicide. Before doing so, however, he wanted to paint a large canvas that would be known as the grand culmination of his thoughts. Painted on rough sacking, and at 139 × 375 cm. **Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?** (1897) is the largest and possibly Gauguin's most important painting. The painting is notable for its enigmatic subject and atmosphere, which leads some critics to consider it "a philosophical work comparable to the themes of the Gospels".

From the age of eleven to the age of sixteen Gauguin had been a student at a seminar, where a catechism had been devised by his teacher to lead them towards proper spiritual reflections on the nature of life. The three fundamental questions in this catechism were "where does humanity come from?" "where is it going to?", and "how does humanity proceed?". Although in later life Gauguin was vociferously anticlerical, these questions had lodged in his mind.

The three major groups in the painting reflect the overall themes presented in the title: The three crouched women with a sleeping child on the right represent the beginning of life; the middle group symbolizes the daily existence of young adulthood; in the final group, according to the artist, "an old woman approaching death appears reconciled and resigned to her thoughts"; at her feet, "a strange white bird...represents the futility of words" or "the uselessness of vain words". Together, the painting from right to left suggests the

cycle of "birth-sin-death". Outside of this cycle of life, there is a blue figure. The blue idol in the background represents what Gauguin described as "the Beyond."

Near the blissful people are two sorrowful women by a tree who stand in contrast with their surroundings. In front is a crouched figure who lifts her arm. The three women have been interpreted by one scholar as representing the contrast between enlightenment and "superstitious, irrational, even barbaric traditions".

Gauguin approaches the life cycle from a feminine perspective. The girl surrounded by kittens demonstrates the purity of "girlhood". The figure in the centre is placed in a "Garden of Eden motif"; she is picking fruits from a tree. Gauguin intended to represent this woman as sin, like the allegory of Eve. Maternity is represented through the figures that surround the baby. Along with the motherhood of a woman's life, Gauguin also displays the idea of "domestic submission" through the bracelet and collar worn by the mature woman on the left and the white goat, respectively. Finally, the state of seniority can be seen through the old woman on the left.

During the process of creating this painting, Gauguin experienced a number of difficult events in his personal life. He suffered from medical conditions including eczema, syphilis, conjunctivitis and a series of heart attacks. He also faced financial challenges, going into debt.

Following the completion of the painting Gauguin made a suicide attempt with arsenic. He wrote to Daniel de Monfreid: "I went to hide in the mountains, where my corpse would be eaten up by ants. I didn't have a revolver, but I did have arsenic that I had hoarded during the time that I had eczema." However, it is possible that he took too large a dose which caused him to be sick, and he survived.



In *The White Horse* (1898) the animal stands at the front in water amidst mysterious vegetation. In the centre and background are two almost hidden horsemen emerging from the branches of the trees.

The horse was a comparatively rare animal in Polynesia, having been introduced from the West in the sixteenth century, but Gauguin has placed these three animals in this tropical Eden as if they belonged there quite naturally. The White Horse of the title, which was given to the paintings after Gauguin's death, is riderless, but the two animals in the background are mounted. It is difficult to know exactly what Gauguin intended by the work, given the absence of his usual inscribed title, but the lush vegetation, rich colours and naked figures suggest an earthly paradise in which man and nature co-exist quite happily.

In the Polynesian imagination the white horse is a sacred animal. Gauguin was able to express this artistically by borrowing the stance of the horse from the frieze on the Parthenon in Athens, of which he possessed old photographs.

The composition rises with a continuous flow of curves from bottom to top, an arrangement without a horizon, in which space is suggested rather than rendered. Horizontal and vertical planes (the pool and plants of the foreground, and the road and twining branches of the background) flow into each other, all painted in a perspective that views the scene at once from in front and from above. This, and the twisting, curving pattern of the horses backs, the leaf forms, and the climbing vine trunks hark back to the Japanese print. The flat pattern and raised perspective of the Japanese woodcut had been major sources of Gauguin's style in Brittany, but in Tahiti their influence had diminished. Here Gauguin seems to recall that style, but he has softened and varied it. Horses and riders are more modelled than the rest, (although diminishing size as they recede from a high viewpoint recalls oriental art), and there is an almost Impressionist variation of light and texture within the areas of pool and field.

During this year, due to ill health he produced comparatively little, and in August he was hospitalised for three weeks. For a short time he took a six-franc a day job as clerk at the Office of Public Works and Surveys in Papeete.

In November *Where do we Come From ...* was exhibited at Vollard's gallery, along with eight thematically related paintings. This was his first major exhibition in Paris since his Durand-Ruel show in 1893 and it was a decided success, critics praising his new serenity. *Where do we come from?*, however, received mixed reviews and Vollard had difficulty in selling it.

The canvases that Gauguin sent back to France from the South Seas reflect the license he exercised in fashioning images of Indigenous women. Here, in *Two Tahitian Women* or *Women with Mangoes* (1899), he channeled classicizing nudes, while relying on gesture and facial expression to evoke the ideal "Tahitian Eve" conjured in his writings: "very subtle, very knowing in her naïveté" and enviably "capable of walking around naked without shame." Whispering confidences, offering exotic blossoms or (forbidden) fruit, the women inhabit a tropical Eden of Gauguin's invention, in which his artistic vision – and male gaze – hold sway.





The theme of motherhood recurred throughout the Polynesian period of Gauguin's life but ***Women on the Seashore, Maternity I*** was linked with a concrete event, the birth of a son, Emile, by the artist's second Tahitian wife, Pau'ura, the daughter of his neighbours, in 1899. A real scene is transformed into a holy ritual and indeed the composition recalls traditional European religious paintings showing the *Adoration of Christ*. The central woman with her flowers and hands clasped as if in prayer majestically forms the background to the gentle woman feeding her child. The sense of significance and meaning is balanced by a decorative effect created by means of the rhythmically arranged large areas of colour and repeated contours which are characteristic of Gauguin's very individual style.

Without access to a printing press he was obliged to turn to the monotype process in his graphic work, ***Eve (The Nightmare)*** (1899–1900) is an example. Surviving examples of these prints are rather rare and command very high prices in the saleroom.

In August 1899 he published the first edition of his satirical journal *Le Sourire*. His targets were the French Colonial administration, Chinese Immigrants, the Catholic church and the Protestant missionaries.

In February 1900 he became the editor of the satirical journal *Les Guêpes*, an organ of the Catholic faction in Papeete, for which he drew a salary, and he continued as editor until he left Tahiti in September 1901. The paper under his editorship was noted for its scurrilous attacks on the governor and officialdom in general, but was not in fact a champion of native causes, although nevertheless it was perceived as such.

In March Vollard made an agreement with Gauguin, providing him with a regular monthly advance of 300 francs against a guaranteed purchase of at least 25 unseen paintings a year at 200 francs each, and in addition Vollard undertook to supply him with his art materials. There were some initial problems on both sides, but Gauguin was finally able to realise his long cherished plan of resettling in the Marquesas Islands in search of a yet more primitive society. He spent his final months in Tahiti living in considerable comfort, as attested by the liberality with which he entertained his friends at that time.

At this time he was also fortunate to gain the support of the artist and wealthy collector Gustave Fayet, from Béziers, who became one of Gauguin's main clients. He lent many of the paintings in his collection for the Gauguin exhibitions between 1903 and 1925. In 1908, he bought and restored the Abbey de Fontfroide near Narbonne where he exhibited many of the paintings from his collection.

In May Gauguin's son, Clovis, died of a blood infection following a hip operation aged twenty one. He probably never found out. In December and the following spring he was repeatedly hospitalised.

In September of 1901 he moved to Hiva-Oa in the Marquesas Islands, some 800 miles from Tahiti. Pau'ura refused to accompany him to the Marquesas away from her family in Puna'auia. In April 1899 she had given birth to his son Émile Marae a Tai who was illiterate and raised in Tahiti by Pau'ura. (In 1963 he was brought to Chicago by the French journalist Josette Giraud and became an artist in his own right; his descendants were still living in Tahiti as of 2001.) When the English author Somerset Maugham visited Pau'ura in 1917, she could offer him no useful memory of Gauguin and chided him for visiting her without bringing money from Gauguin's family.



“Oh mysterious world... I have become better for having understood and having loved thy human soul - a flower which has ceased to bloom and whose fragrance no one henceforth will breathe.”



Gauguin had nurtured his plan of settling in the Marquesas ever since seeing a collection of intricately carved Marquesan bowls and weapons in Papeete during his first months in Tahiti. However, he found a society that, as in Tahiti, had lost its cultural identity. Of all the Pacific island groups, the Marquesas were the most affected by the import of Western diseases (especially tuberculosis). An eighteenth century population of some 80,000 had declined to just 4,000. Catholic missionaries held sway and, in their effort to control drunkenness and promiscuity, obliged all native children to attend missionary schools into their teens. French colonial rule was enforced by a gendarmerie noted for its malevolence and stupidity, while traders, both Western and Chinese, exploited the natives appallingly.

Gauguin settled in Atuona on the island of Hiva-Oa. This was the administrative capital of the island group, but considerably less developed than Papeete although there was an efficient and regular steamer service between the two. There was no hospital only a military doctor who was relocated to Papeete the following February. Thereafter Gauguin had to rely on the island's two health care workers, the Vietnamese exile Nguyen Van Cam (Ky Dong), who had settled on the island but had no formal medical training, and the Protestant pastor Paul Vernier, who had studied medicine in addition to theology. Both of these were to become close friends.

He bought a plot of land in the centre of the town from the Catholic mission. By attending mass regularly he ingratiated himself with the local bishop, Monseigneur Joseph Martin, who initially was well disposed to Gauguin because he was aware that he had sided with the Catholic party in Tahiti in his journalism.



He constructed a traditional two-floor house which he called the **Maison-de-Jouir, The House of Joy** with carved lintel and surrounds. He was helped in the task by the two best Marquesan carpenters on the island, one of them called Tioka, a deacon in Vernier's congregation who was tattooed from head to toe in the traditional Marquesan way (a tradition suppressed by the missionaries). The ground floor was open-air and used for dining and living, while the top floor was used for sleeping and as his studio. After his death the carvings were auctioned and the house abandoned. There is now a reconstruction of the house on the site, with copies of the carved surrounds. After an initial period of entertaining the neighbours who came to stare at the unconventional lifestyle of the new inhabitant, reinvigorated by the move he started painting again.

In the early days at least, until Gauguin found a *vahine*, Mari-Rose Vaeoho, the house drew appreciative crowds in the evenings from the natives, who came to stare at the pictures and party half the night away. Needless to say, all this did not endear Gauguin to the bishop, still less when Gauguin erected two sculptures at the foot of his steps lampooning the bishop and a servant reputed to be the bishop's mistress, and yet still less when Gauguin later attacked the unpopular missionary school system.

Vaeoho was the fourteen-year-old daughter of a native couple who lived in an adjoining valley six miles distant. For her 'marriage' to Gauguin can scarcely have been a pleasant task as his sores were by then extremely noxious and required daily dressing. Nevertheless, she lived willingly with him and the following year gave birth to a healthy daughter whose descendants continue to live on the island.

By November he had settled into his new home with Vaeoho, a cook (Kahui), two other servants (nephews of Tioka), his dog, Pegau, and a cat. The house itself, although in the centre of the town, was set amongst trees and secluded from view. The partying ceased and he began a period of productive work, sending twenty canvases to Vollard the following April. Thinking that he would find new motifs in the Marquesas, writing to de Monfreid in June he said:

"I think in the Marquesas, where it is easy to find models (a thing that is growing more and more difficult in Tahiti), and with new country to explore – with new and more savage subject matter in brief – that I shall do beautiful things. Here my imagination has begun to cool, and then, too, the public has grown so used to Tahiti. The world is so stupid that if one shows it canvases containing new and *terrible* elements, Tahiti will become comprehensible and charming. My Brittany pictures are now rose-water because of Tahiti; Tahiti will become eau de Cologne because of the Marquesas."

In 1901, the manuscript of *Noa Noa* that Gauguin had prepared along with woodcuts during his interlude in France was finally published with Morice's poems in book form in the *La Plume* edition (the manuscript itself is now lodged in the Louvre museum).



Gauguin based this formidable composition, **Two Women**, on a photograph of two women seated side by side on the stoop of a house. He painted it just before or after his 1901 departure from Tahiti for the Marquesas Islands.

His Marquesas work for the most part can only be distinguished from his Tahiti work by experts or by their dates, paintings such as *Two Women* remaining uncertain in their location. For art historian Anna Szech, what distinguishes them is their repose and melancholy, albeit containing elements of disquiet.

State funding for the missionary schools had ceased as a result of the 1901 Associations Bill promulgated throughout the French empire. Schools continued with difficulty as private institutions, but these difficulties were compounded when Gauguin established that attendance at any given school was only compulsory within a catchment area of some two and a half miles radius. This led to numerous teen-age daughters being withdrawn from the

schools, a process which Gauguin, opposed to the westernised teaching, called "rescuing".

Gauguin chose to paint landscapes, still-lives, and figure studies at this time, with an eye to Vollard's clientele, avoiding the primitive and lost paradise themes of his Tahiti paintings. But there is a significant trio of pictures from this last period that suggest deeper concerns. The first two of these are *Jeune fille à l'éventail* (*Young Girl with Fan*) and *Le Sorcier d'Hiva Oa* (*Marquesan Man in a Red Cape*).

In *Young Girl with a Fan* Gauguin paints the young girl holding her fan and dressed in white, the traditional local colour of power and death. This confers on his model, the daughter of a chieftain, a goddess-like status. Despite the downward viewpoint, the girl gazes out beyond the picture space with a look of eternal wisdom. The space is flattened as is typical of Gauguin's style – the world stylistically painted with symbolic intent. Painted in 1902, it features Tohotaua, the beautiful, red-headed wife of the witch-doctor of Hiva-Oa.



The subject sits on a carved wooden chair, seemingly emotionless, secluded and removed from the outside world. The remote setting, defined shadows and path of light sources, and the stillness with which the subject sits indicate the photographic source from which the painting was done.

The original pose assumed by the subject in the photograph more or less remains in the painting, with only a few small but significant changes having been made to the overall composition. The position of Tohotaua's head has been altered a little so that she apparently stares into space without engaging with the observer. The white pareo (sarong) which she wears in the photograph is wrapped to cover her breasts but in the painting it sits beneath, exposing them, with the white feather fan in her right hand moved slightly in order to teasingly cover her right breast. According to Gauguin, this vision exemplified the epitome of a Marquesan woman. The chair on which Tohotaua sits has also been altered to be more carved, ornate and grand, furthering the status of the subject. This is a romanticized version of the scene, with the artist concentrating only on the essential details. By muting the background details of the photograph, Gauguin was able to afford simplicity to the surroundings whilst increasing the perceived status of the subject.

Szech notes that the white colour of Tohotau's dress is a symbol of power and death in Polynesian culture, the sitter doing duty for a Maohi culture as a whole threatened with extinction.



The model for *Le Sorcier d'Hiva Oa; Marquesan Man in a Red Cape* may have been Haapuani, an accomplished dancer as well as a feared magician, who was a close friend of Gauguin's and, according to Swedish anthropologist Bengt Danielsson, married to Tohotaua. *Le Sorcier* appears to have been executed at the same time as *Young Girl with a Fan* and depicts a long-haired young man wearing an exotic red cape. The androgynous nature of the image has attracted critical attention, giving rise to speculation that Gauguin intended to depict a *māhū* (i.e. a third gender person) rather than a *taua* or priest.

The fox and bird, conversing at the bottom right of the image, are natural enemies with many differences. This is perhaps Gauguin's way of portraying male and female genders "conversing" and getting along with one another to symbolize the *māhū* individual's gender. Two women dressed in white emerge from behind a tree on the left, occupying a wedge of space between the tree and Haapuani's shoulder, adding to the sense of mystery: are they in conversation; secretly observing the sorcerer or perhaps his assistants?

The third picture of the trio is the mysterious and beautiful *Contes Barbares; Primitive Tales* featuring Tohotau again at the right. The left figure is Meyer de Haan, the Dutch painter friend of Gauguin's from their Pont-Aven days, who had died a few years previously. The middle figure is again androgynous, identified by some as Haapuani. The Buddha-like pose and the lotus blossoms suggests to Elizabeth Childs that the picture is a meditation on the perpetual cycle of life and the possibility of rebirth.



De Haan was handicapped by curvature of the spine, but a man of formidable intellect, and greatly respected by Gauguin. Their friendship persisted and from their first meeting in Pont Aven to this posthumous inclusion in an imagined Polynesian scene Gauguin made more portraits of him than of any other male, usually with his chin resting on his hand to suggest that he is engrossed in impenetrable depths of thought. Here, hovering in the background, the crouching persona, clad in a blue dress, the *vahine's* voluminous missionary style smock, but revealing devilish clawed feet, makes a last appearance in this powerful but wilfully enigmatic composition.

As these paintings reached Vollard after Gauguin's sudden death, nothing is known about Gauguin's intentions in their execution.

In July 1902, Vaeoho, by then seven months pregnant, left Gauguin to return home to her neighbouring valley of Hekeani to have her baby amongst family and friends. She gave birth in September but did not return. Gauguin did not subsequently take another *vahine*. It was at this time that his quarrel with Bishop Martin over missionary schools reached its height. In April criminal charges had been brought against him for refusing to pay taxes and inciting the Marquesans to do the same. The local gendarme, Désiré Charpillat, at first friendly to Gauguin, wrote a report to the administrator of the island group, who resided on the neighbouring island of Nuku Hiva, criticizing Gauguin for encouraging natives to withdraw their children from school as well as encouraging settlers to withhold payment of their taxes. As luck would have it, the post of administrator had recently been filled by François Picquenot, an old friend of Gauguin's from Tahiti and essentially sympathetic to him. Picquenot advised Charpillat not to take any action over the schools issue, since Gauguin had the law on his side, but authorised Charpillat to seize goods from Gauguin in lieu of payment of taxes if all else failed.



The bishop's initially favourable disposition towards Gauguin lapsed when he was caricatured in the sculpture which Gauguin called **Père Paillard (Father Lechery)**, along with one of the bishop's servants, reputed to be his mistress. These were among at least eight sculptures that adorned the house according to a posthumous inventory, most of which are lost today. Together they represented a very public attack on the hypocrisy of the church in sexual matters.

After he had moved to Hivaoa in 1901, Gauguin returned to the theme of horse and rider, in two works that are clearly influenced by the Parisian racing scenes of Degas.



For Anna Szech, what distinguishes them is their repose and melancholy, albeit containing elements of disquiet. Thus, in the second of two versions of **Riders on the Beach**, gathering clouds and foamy breakers suggest an impending storm while the two distant figures on grey horses echo similar figures in other paintings that are taken to symbolise death.



Gauguin was not afraid to repeat himself. So, his young Tahitian wife Tehura appears on many canvases as a heroine and a model. In the depth of the picture, **Two Women** or **Flowery Hair** (1902), a rider from another picture appears in an evening light.

A bright orange dog sitting in the door pricks up his ears – a sign that he is on the alert for something important about to happen. The young woman in front with flowers in her hair half turns to the onlooker; she resembles Tehura while the other, who is older, engages us with a sidelong, quizzical glance. The inclusion of the painting in the upper right corner, with a blue image of possibly a praying figure or angel, imparts a sense of mystery. Then, is the scene on the left really an open door or another painting, perhaps a vision from another world?

According to Gauguin, he painted still-lives when he felt tired, and very often from memory or imagination, without a need to make some composition out of the objects. In **Still life with Exotic Birds** (1902) instead of the carcasses of ducks or pheasants, familiar to the European viewer, here on the table there are three dead parrots, usually perceived as "fancy" birds and pets. On tropical islands, the parrot is considered to be a game bird. In the background Gauguin's ceramic statuette of the Tahitian goddess Hina, in combination with the birds resemble a sacrifice. In general, the picture is filled with a rather gloomy symbolism. The bright plumage of the parrots grabs the attention first, but quite quickly comes the realization that the birds are dead. And the fact that the objects are arranged on a travelling trunk covered with a tablecloth only enhances the image of the frailty of all existence and living beings' fleeting life on earth.



Tired and aged, yet not entirely defeated, for a while he considered returning to Europe, to Spain, to get treatment. However, in October de Monfreid advised him:

“In returning you will risk damaging that process of incubation which is taking place in the public's appreciation of you. You are currently this extraordinary legendary artist, who from the depths of Oceania sends disturbing, inimitable works, definitive works of a great man who in a way has disappeared from the world. Your enemies – and like all who upset the mediocrities you have many enemies – are silent; but they dare not attack you, do not even think of it. You are so far away. You should not return....In short, you enjoy the immunity of great dead men, you have passed into the history of art.”

On 7th January 1903 a cyclone destroyed many of the houses. However, Gauguin's house was sturdy enough to survive. Tioka became Gauguin's neighbour after the cyclone when Gauguin gifted him a corner of his plot.

At this time he embarked on a campaign of writing legalistic letters to the authorities, denouncing corruption and defending the rights of the Marquesans.



In this painting, *Women and a White Horse* (1903),—thought to be one of his last—Gauguin depicts a frieze-like arrangement of three local women and a white horse, framed by a vibrant cascade of tropical vegetation. The white horse in the image probably has a symbolic meaning related to the Polynesian beliefs about life and death. The Polynesians associated white with death and the worship of their gods. On the hilltop above stands a single white cross—a rare visual acknowledgment by Gauguin of French missionary activity in the colonies. It marks the Catholic cemetery where the artist's body was laid to rest not long after he completed this painting.

Starting in Martinique, Gauguin began using analogous colours in close proximity to achieve a muted effect. Shortly after this, he also made his breakthroughs in non-representational colour, creating canvases that had an independent existence and vitality all their own. This development displeased Pissarro and quickly led to the end of their relationship. His human figures at this time are also a reminder of his love affair with Japanese prints and folk art, particularly gravitating to the naivety of their figures and compositional austerity as an influence on his primitive manifesto. He sought out a bare emotional purity of his subjects conveyed in a straightforward way, emphasizing major forms and upright lines to clearly define shape and contour. Gauguin also used elaborate formal decoration and colouring in patterns of abstraction, attempting to harmonize man and nature. His depictions of the natives in their natural environment are frequently evident of serenity and a self-contained sustainability. This complimented one of Gauguin's favourite themes, which was the intrusion of the supernatural into day-to-day life. *Her Name is Vairaumati* and *Ta Matete* recall ancient Egyptian tomb reliefs.

Analogous colours are groups of three colours: two that are next to each other on the colour wheel, and a tertiary. Red, orange, and red-orange are examples.

An analogous colour scheme creates a rich, monochromatic look. When used with either warm or cool colours it creates a look that has a certain temperature and colour harmony. While this is true, the scheme also lacks contrast and is less vibrant than complementary colour schemes.

These colour schemes are most often seen in nature. For example, during autumn, the changing leaves form an analogous sort of colour scheme, progressively moving through the colour wheel to create a gradient in its natural pattern.

High-key colour schemes have a lighter value, having white added to them or water in the case of watercolours. creating a paler or more pastel-like look to them. A high-key analogous colour scheme which from a distance appears as a single colour, can give a piece a stimulating shimmer that pleases the eye, a commonly used technique in impressionism by artists such as Monet, Pissarro, Degas and Bonnard.



Seven-colour and twelve-colour colour wheels from 1708, attributed to Claude Boutet

Although increasingly afflicted by ill-health, Gauguin continued to create work in multiple media, shipping artwork back to Paris to be sold on the European art market. The artist's frequent writings around these years express his growing antagonism to both colonial authority and the institution of the Catholic Church, while he himself continued to benefit from colonial structures.

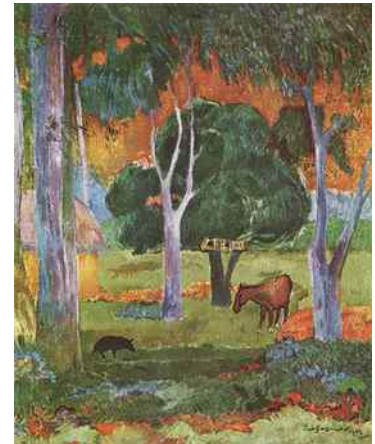
His health further deteriorated in December to the extent that he was scarcely able to paint. He began an autobiographical memoir: *Avant et après (Before and After)* (published in translation in the US as *Intimate Journals*), which he completed over the next two months. The title was supposed to reflect his experiences before and after coming to Tahiti and as tribute to his own grandmother's unpublished memoir *Past and Future*. His memoir proved to be a fragmented collection of observations about life in Polynesia, his own life, and comments on literature and paintings. He included in it attacks on subjects as diverse as the local

gendarmerie, Bishop Martin, his wife Mette and the Danes in general, and concluded with a description of his personal philosophy conceiving life as an existential struggle to reconcile opposing binaries. Nancy Mathews notes two closing remarks as a distillation of his philosophy:

“No one is good; no one is evil; everyone is both, in the same way and in different ways. It is so small a thing, the life of a man, and yet there is time to do great things, fragments of the common task.” *Intimate Journals*, 1903

The emphasis of *Hiva Oa Landscape La Dominique* or *Landscape With a Pig and a Horse* (1903) lies in its symbolism and the geometric alignment of the principal subjects; the symmetry dominating the entire painting. A central viewing point is created by three tree trunks painted in shades of pale mauve. This triangular frame immediately draws the eye to the centre of the canvas and the two animals, the pig and the horse.

Although Gauguin's work is often in the flat, two-dimensional style of synthetism, the trees convey a sense of perspective. The colourful drifts of foliage in blue, russet and green, form increasingly pale layers that recede into the background. However, Gauguin's sense of perspective remains primitive and devoid of intricate shading. Conversely, the brushstrokes of the landscape are well-defined. The short, vertical strokes appear to be applied at speed, in contrast to the peaceful, calm atmosphere suggested by the animals.



The small, black pig is standing by the left-hand tree just inside the central triangle. The horse is positioned between the central and right-hand trees, and appears to be about to enter the triangular arena. The animals are facing each other, but their postures are stationary and passive, displaying a warm, mutual friendship. Their relationship symbolises Gauguin's close friendship with the islanders of Hiva Oa. The pig is a native animal of the Marquesas Islands of French Polynesia, but the horse, like Gauguin, came to the island in the late nineteenth century. This idea is further enhanced by the pig's position near the traditional hut that's partly obscured by the left-hand tree.



In the undated *Tahitians on a River Bank* the figures merge into the colours and shapes of the painting. They are integrated into the design and inseparable from the fabric of the painting.

At the beginning of 1903, Gauguin engaged in a campaign designed to expose the incompetence of the island's gendarmes, in particular Jean-Paul Claverie, relating to a case involving the alleged drunken behaviour of a group of natives. Claverie, however, escaped censure. At the beginning of February, Gauguin wrote to the administrator, François Picquenot, alleging corruption by one of Claverie's subordinates. Picquenot investigated the allegations but could not substantiate them. Claverie responded by filing a charge against Gauguin of libelling a gendarme. Gauguin was subsequently fined 500 francs and

sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the local magistrate on 27 March 1903. Gauguin immediately filed an appeal in Papeete and set about raising the funds to travel to Papeete to hear his appeal.

His sight was also beginning to fail him, as attested by the spectacles he wears in his last known *Self-Portrait*. This was actually a portrait commenced by his friend Ky Dong that he completed himself, thus accounting for its uncharacteristic style. It shows a man tired and aged, yet not entirely defeated.



At this time Gauguin was very weak and in great pain and resorted once again to using morphine. Before his appeal could be heard he died suddenly of heart failure on the morning of 8 May 1903. He was buried in the Catholic Calvary Cemetery in Atuona, Hiva 'Oa, at 2 p.m. the next day. In 1973, a bronze cast of his *Oviri* figure was placed on his grave, as he had indicated was his wish.



On 23rd August. Daniel de Monfreid received notice of Gauguin's death.

On 2nd-3rd September a hurried auction of his effects lead to the loss of vital documents. The naval doctor Victor Segalen, who was on his way to meet Gauguin at the time of his death, bought some of the most important works saving them for posterity.

From the 6th October to 15th November 1906 a major retrospective of 227 works was held at the Salon de Automne.