

RITUAL and REALITY



PRINTS of the NABIS

**RITUAL and REALITY:
PRINTS of the NABIS**

Intro

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THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS - LAWRENCE

PREFACE

RITUAL and REALITY: PRINTS of the NABIS

Introductory essay by Jeanne Stump

Catalogue by Deborah Barker, Jeanne Stump,
and Ann Wiklund

March 1 – April 8, 1979

SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS LAWRENCE

PREFACE

The abundance of styles and influences current in France in the second half of the nineteenth century—Post Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism, Japanese woodblock prints—opened a bewildering number of avenues to artists. For a brief period in the 1890s, a group of artists who called themselves *Les Nabis* synthesized elements chosen from such sources as Puvis de Chavannes, Redon, Gauguin, and Japanese prints, as well as from Symbolist literature. These intellectual artists, much concerned with theories about the true nature of art, paved the way for twentieth-century modernism by insisting that the higher meaning of a subject be revealed in its form.

The prints created by Nabi artists are less well-known than their paintings, though they often turned to print-making to develop their ideas. The many theater programs designed by this group, for example, show their close involvement with contemporary theatrical productions. The periodical *La Revue Blanche*, which opened its Paris offices in 1891, frequently published their works, making them accessible to the entire avant-garde community.

A graduate seminar offered by Professor Jeanne Stump at The University of Kansas in the fall, 1977, focused on the Nabis, a group in which she had long been interested. The possibility of producing an exhibition of Nabi prints at the new Spencer Museum of Art became a certainty at the end of the seminar, with the result that Ann Wiklund and Deborah Barker, two of the participants in the seminar, agreed to work with Professor Stump in selecting prints for the exhibition and preparing the catalogue entries. The opportunity for advanced students to help on such a project is an important aspect of education at a university museum; the close cooperation of faculty, students, and museum staff in this instance has been especially gratifying.

In an exhibition of this limited size it is impossible to explore fully all the ramifications of Nabi imagery. Instead, representative examples by ten members of the Nabi circle have been included, along with prints by artists who were precursors of the Nabis or who worked in related styles. These have been chosen to indicate the range and direction of Nabi interests.

The Spencer Museum is pleased to be able to exhibit ten theatre programs from the collection of the Atlas Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Martin Atlas of Washington, D.C., allowing the relationship between Nabi art and contemporary drama to be acknowledged. A number of private lenders graciously contributed prints to the exhibition, including Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Collinson, and Professor and Mrs. Robert Anderson of Lawrence, Kansas.

Several art museums also agreed to loan prints for this occasion: the Art Institute of Chicago, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the University of Iowa Museum of Art, the University of Michigan Museum of Art, the Nelson Gallery—Atkins Museum, and the St. Louis Art Museum. These institutions each supplied photographs of their works which are pictured in the catalogue. The willingness of these museums to loan important prints for the exhibition is greatly appreciated.

Elizabeth Broun
Curator of Prints and Drawings

INFLUENCES on the NABIS



1 Emile Bernard, *Brétonnes étendent leur linge*.

EMILE BERNARD

1868–1941

In the Breton town of Pont-Aven in 1888, Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard joined together to originate the painting and graphic style called Synthetism, the matrix of the Nabi style. Gauguin's emergence from a Pissarro-influenced Impressionism was enriched by Bernard's technique of broad, flat planes of color bounded by dark lines. This "cloisonnisme," developed at Pont-Aven and inspired by Breton folk art, early woodcuts, Japanese prints, medieval enamels and stained glass leading, can be seen in Bernard's print (1). The Pont-Aven artists loved to depict simple rituals of everyday life enhanced by the rustic costumes and celtic ambiance of Brittany.

- *1. *Brétonnes étendent leur linge*, c. 1889
(Breton Women Hanging Laundry)

Hand-colored woodcut, printed in 1952 by the *Guilde de la Gravure*

Image 10.6 x 39.3 (4 1/4 x 15 1/2)

The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

EUGENE CARRIERE

1849–1906

Eugène Carrière's poetic, Symbolist style brought him to the Nabis' attention. Called the "Rodin of painters," in his prints he modelled with the greasy lithographic *tusche*, creating images veiled in "visible atmosphere." Single, soulful figures or mothers with children are the artist's most common themes. Beneath the figure in the print *Méditation* (2), a caption reads in part ". . . mon âme (my soul)."

Carrière's transmutations of simple portraits and scenes into mysterious, luminous evocations appealed to the Nabis, and Denis admired Carrière's ability to depict "states of soul."

2. *Méditation*, n. d.

Lithograph

Image 24.2 x 15.3 (9 1/2 x 6)

The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

PAUL GAUGUIN

1848–1903

Unquestionably the most dramatic and important influence on the formation of the Nabis was Paul Gauguin. His intuitive realization of the power and beauty of pure color and flat pictorial space was a revelation which Sérusier carried to the Académie Julian and preached to his friends, the future Nabis. Gauguin's sojourns in Brittany, Panama, Martinique, and Tahiti reflected a lifelong search for lands of mystery where spirituality still permeated daily life. The print *Manao Tupapau* (3), one of several related in theme to the well-known painting of the same name, was done upon Gauguin's return to Paris after his first Tahitian trip. The artist's primitivism was strengthened by contact with Oceanic art, and his iconography broadened by his confrontation with Polynesian mythology.

- *3. *Manao Tupapau*, 1894

(Watched by the Spirits of the Dead)

Woodcut, printed in 1921 by Pola Gauguin

Plate 20.3 x 35.2 (8 x 13 7/8)

The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs.

Florence L. Stol



3 Paul Gauguin, *Manao Tupapu*. The University of Michigan Museum of Art.

UTAGAWA KUNIYOSHI 1798–1861

Since the 1860s, the Japanese *ukiyo-e* printmakers had been a major influence on French art. They were appreciated for their masterful use of flat planes of bright color arranged in rich harmonies, asymmetrical and diagonal compositions, and elegant, serpentine lines. Each generation of the avant-garde found new design motifs and techniques; Toulouse-Lautrec and the Nabis found in them models for their own experiments in print media. The Nabis were especially drawn to the subject matter of Japanese prints—actors and entertainers, street scenes, and interiors with women—as reflections of their own varied world of Parisian urbanity, quiet domesticity, and involvement with the Symbolist theater.

*4. *Courtesan Dressing*, 1843-1846

Color woodcut

Image 35.7 x 25 (14 x 9 3/4)

The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas,
The May Finney Marcy Collection

Puvis' technique was a blend of simplified academic drawing, pale fresco-like coloring and intentionally naive composition. By 1892, Puvis was the President of the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, but nonetheless influenced independent artists and movements far removed from this citadel of academicism: Symbolism, Gauguin, the Nabis, Art Nouveau, and the young Picasso.

5. *Head of a Girl*, n. d.

Lithograph, in sepia

Image 28.9 x 22.9 (11 3/4 x 9)

The University of Iowa Museum of Art



4 Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Courtesan Dressing*.

PIERRE PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

1824–1898

One of the idols of the avant-garde in the 1890s was Puvis de Chavannes, heir to the idealism and linear tradition of Ingres. The bourgeois comforts of France during the Third Republic still produced artists longing for Arcadian simplicity as filtered through the melancholy temperament of Puvis de Chavannes. Although his themes were traditional,

ODILON REDON

1840–1916

Another Symbolist influence on the Nabis was Odilon Redon, many of whose prints were evocations of those writers and artists who inspired the Symbolists: Edgar Allen Poe, Flaubert, Goya, and Baudelaire. Fittingly, he designed a frontispiece for Joris-Karl Huysmans' novel of fin-de-siècle decadence, *A Rebours*, in which his own works are described. The two prints in this exhibition reflect the range of his talent. In the etching *Passage d'une âme* (6) the inky blacks and scratchy lines create a suitably moody but

ill-defined Symbolist setting, while in the vaporous *Beatrice* (7) Redon's delicate, airy watercolors and pastels are recalled by means of masterful manipulation of color lithography.

*6. *Passage d'une âme*, 1891
(Passage of a Soul)

Etching, frontispiece for Remacle's *La Passante*
Image 8.4 x 5.3 (3 5/8 x 2 1/4)
The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

7. *Béatrice*, 1897

Color lithograph, from *L'Album d'estampes originales de la Galerie Vollard*
Image 30 x 29.5 (13 1/8 x 11 5/8)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the Print Club of Cleveland



6 Odilon Redon, *Passage d'une âme*.



9 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Marcelle Lender en buste*.

HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC

1864-1901

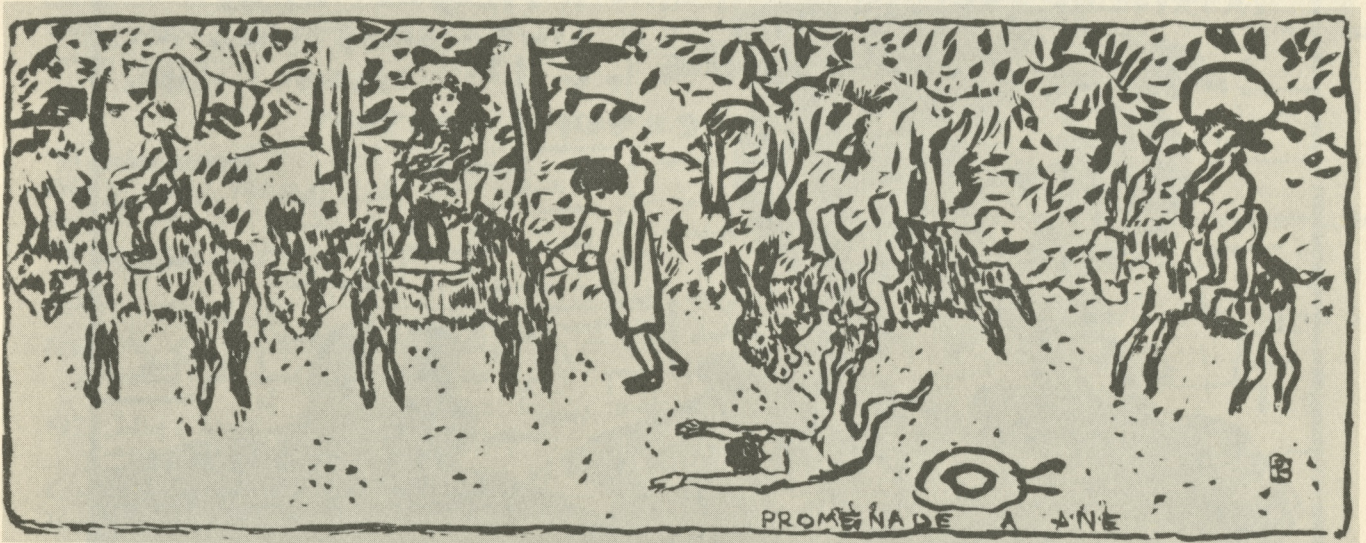
Toulouse-Lautrec's work seems to epitomize the seamier side of Paris life in the 1890s. His sophisticated, cynical prints and posters celebrate the world of cabarets, brothels, boulevards, and café life; his cynicism is not shared by the more conventional Nabis. Too often it is forgotten that the Nabis made a contribution similar to that of Lautrec to the lithographic renaissance of the times. *Marcelle Lender en buste* (9), a famous eight-color print displaying the *crachis* method of applying spatters of ink onto the stone by means of a toothbrush, shows the actress in her costume for *Chilpéric*, a play to which Lautrec returned more than twenty times just to see her. D.B.

8. *Madame Abdala*, 1893

Lithograph, from the album *Le Café-Concert*
Image 26.7 x 20 (10 1/2 x 7 7/8)
The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Gift of Owen and Leone Elliott

*9. *Marcelle Lender en buste*, 1895

Color lithograph
Image 32.5 x 24.1 (12 3/4 x 9 1/2)
The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas



10 Pierre Bonnard, *Promenade à Anes*.

PIERRE BONNARD

1867–1947

Although Pierre Bonnard's father encouraged him to study law, his predilection for art soon led him to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian. Bonnard's early career was decisively influenced by Gauguin's Synthetist theories, and his friendship with Redon encouraged his early interest in lithography.

Dubbed the *Nabi très japonard* by the others in the Nabi group, Bonnard admired the arabesque lines and asymmetrical composition of the Japanese prints which were widely circulated in Paris in the early 1890s.

Bonnard learned about lithographic techniques in the studio of Edouard Ancourt with Toulouse-Lautrec and Vuillard. His first lithograph, the poster *France Champagne* emphasized the black outlines of Japanese woodcuts. Bonnard soon abandoned this outlining technique in favor of delicate color masses and flat unmodeled shapes as seen in his poster publicizing *La Revue Blanche* (11).

Among Bonnard's early lithographic efforts is a series of twenty illustrations for the songbook *Petites Scènes familiaires* by Claude Terrasse (10). This collaboration between musician and artist resulted in a delightful animation that stressed the staccato quality of the music.

Although he executed a number of lithographs for *La Revue Blanche* and *L'Estampe originale*, Bonnard's most important lithographic patronage came from Ambroise

Vollard who commissioned *Quelques Aspects de la vie de Paris*, an album of twelve color prints plus a cover. Printed in 1895, the edition of 100 was not exhibited until 1899. This series captured the animated life of the city in casual scenes that reflected Bonnard's interest in the Japanese *ukiyo-e* master Hiroshige, whose skill in portraying the effects of weather is reflected in Bonnard's *Rue le soir, sous la pluie* (12). In *Le Pont des Arts* (13) the horizon is elevated and Bonnard's touch has become soft and cottony. As in all of his lithographs of the mid-1890s, colors are muted although empty areas are often left on the sheet to convey light. Although he relied predominantly upon browns, grays and violets, Bonnard was able to achieve an amazing variety of color nuances.

After 1900 Bonnard's interest in Japanese prints waned and he abandoned the individual color lithograph in favor of book illustrations; Vollard's edition of Verlaine's *Parallèlement* (1900) is a masterpiece. This successful venture was followed by illustrations for *Daphnis et Chloé*. Bonnard's inventive and continually fresh approach to lithography is retained in the book illustrations, in which delicate sketches and whimsical drawings are often intermingled with the text.

Bonnard's painting style also underwent changes after the turn of the century. His brushwork became looser and the impasto thicker and more opaque. But above all Bonnard's later paintings are remarkable for their rich and vivid color.

A.W.

*10. *Promenade à Anes*, 1893
(Donkey Promenade)
Lithograph, for music album *Petites scènes familiares*
Image 9 x 24 (3 1/4 x 9 1/4)
Private Collection

*11. *La Revue Blanche*, 1894
Color lithograph, poster
Sheet 62 x 80 (31 3/8 x 24 3/8)
The University of Michigan Museum of Art

From the album *Quelques Aspects de la vie de Paris*
published by Vollard, 1895:

*12. *Rue le soir, sous la pluie*
(Street on a Rainy Evening)
Color lithograph
Image 25 x 35 (10 x 13 7/8)
Nelson Gallery—Atkins Museum, Acquired through the
Anonymous Fund

13. *Le Pont des Arts*
(View of Le Pont des Arts)
Color lithograph
Image 26 x 41 (10 1/2 x 16 1/4)
The University of Michigan Museum of Art

14. *Les Peintres-Graveurs*, 1896
Color lithograph, poster
Image 64.8 x 48 (25 1/4 x 18 7/8)
The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Gift of Owen and
Leone Elliott

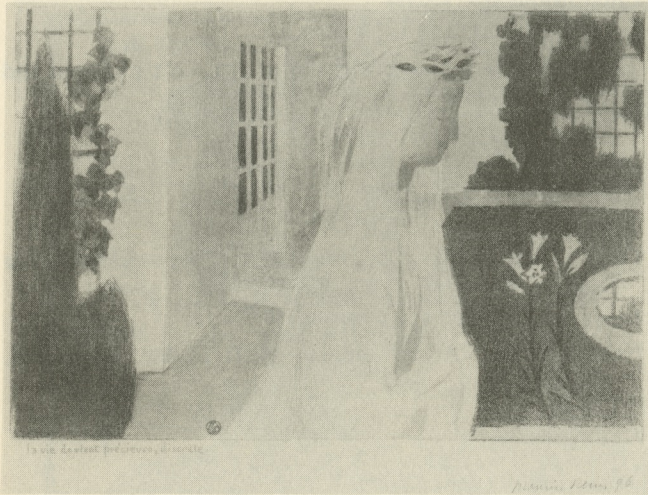
15. *Le Canotage*, 1897
(Canoeing)
Color lithograph, from *L'Album d'estampes originales de la
Galerie Vollard*
Image 26 x 47 (10 1/4 x 18 1/4)
Nelson Gallery—Atkins Museum, Gift of Mr. Richard S.
Davis

16. *Les Boulevards*, 1900
Color lithograph
Image 26 x 33 (10 1/4 x 13)
The University of Michigan Museum of Art

17. *Female Nude*, n. d.
Etching
Image 21.6 x 15.9 (8 5/8 x 6 1/4)
The University of Michigan Museum of Art



12 Pierre Bonnard, *Rue le soir, sous la pluie*, Nelson Gallery—Atkins Museum, Acquired through the Anonymous Fund.



25 Maurice Denis, *La Vie devient précieuse, discrète*. The Art Institute of Chicago, John H. Wrenn Memorial Collection.

Maurice Denis has always been recognized as one of the leaders of the Nabis. His writings, such as the Nabi manifesto “Definition du Néo-Traditionnisme,” published in *Art et Critique* (August 23, 1890), helped to gain recognition for the group, and to explain their ideas and goals. The opening statement of the manifesto “Remember that a picture—before being a war-horse, a nude, or some sort of anecdote—is essentially a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order” is constantly quoted in books on modern art to indicate the advanced nature of Nabi thought. The statement was not a demand for non-representational art, but stressed the formal qualities with which the Nabis were concerned.

Denis was an eager student of art. After a classical education at the noted Lycée Condorcet, he entered the Académie Julian in 1888. His lengthy diary, maintained from 1884 when he first began to take drawing lessons, until the end of his life, furnishes many clues to his ideas. At the age of seventeen he recorded his admiration for the paintings of Puvis de Chavannes, struck by their unusual simplicity, decorative aspects, and harmonious soft colors. He noted with astonishment the way in which Puvis’ composition alone seemed to produce a mysterious impression on the soul. A Botticelli fresco appeared to him to have similar qualities: “naive elegance. . .the serene harmony of a decorative composition, and pale coloring in a luminous and gentle atmosphere,” (*Journal*, December 18, 1887). This surprisingly early awareness of a basic idea of Symbolist art—that composition, line, and color, in and of themselves could create mood almost regardless of the subject—was crucial for Denis and the Nabis. Perhaps more than any other Nabi art works, those of Denis achieve a “spiritual” effect; he believed in the need for art to “sanctify nature,” and in the mission of the artist to create images which were

on the level of icons. Denis’ devout Catholicism had much to do with this attitude toward art.

As a painter and printmaker Denis was extremely prolific, and his work was especially original in the 1890s. It included delicate and dreamlike illustrations for editions of Verlaine’s *Sagesse* and André Gide’s *Voyage d’Urien*, and mysterious and evocative theatre programs, dramatic Art Nouveau wallpaper designs, music sheet covers, and many autonomous prints published by Sagot, Clot, Marty, Geffroy, and Vollard. Denis’ color lithographs have been admired for their tender linearism combined with melting veils of color; the Vollard album *Amour* contains brilliant examples. (Four of the twelve made for the album are included here.)

After 1900 Denis’ most striking single accomplishment was the painted ceiling decorations (still *in situ*) for the large auditorium of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, newly built in Paris and opened in the spring of 1913. (Vuillard and Roussel also created large-scale paintings for this important Auguste Perret monument.) In 1919 Denis founded a firm for the production of church art, the Ateliers d’Art Sacré. He travelled widely, and continued to write extensive art criticism throughout his career. He received many awards, and was promoted to Commander of the Legion of Honor in 1926. He completed a history of religious art in 1939, and a monograph on his old friend Sérusier in 1942.

A last journal entry, written when Denis was seventy-three, poignantly referred to a constant inspiration, Puvis de Chavannes: “No means to see those works of Puvis; they would have taught me so many things.”

*18. *Les Pleureuses*, 1893
(Women Mourning)

Lithograph, published by *La Revue Blanche*
Image 16.3 x 8.6 (6 1/2 x 3 3/4)
Private collection

*19. *Tendresse*, 1893
(Tenderness)

Color lithograph, from *L’Estampe originale*
Image 32.7 x 25.4 (12 7/8 x 10)
The University of Iowa Museum of Art

*20. Program for the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre, 1895
La Scène, La Vérité dans le Vin, Les Pieds Nickelés,
and *Intérieur*, by A. Lebey, Collé, Tristan Bernard,
and M. Maeterlinck

Lithograph
Sheet 24.8 x 32.6 (9 3/4 x 12 3/4)
The Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.

21. Program for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, 1897
Au-Delà des Forces Humaines, La Motte de Terre,
 by Bjornstjerne-Bjornson and Louis Dumur
 Lithograph, green ink
 Sheet 24.8 x 32.6 (9 3/4 x 12 3/4)
 The Atlas Foundation, Washington, D. C.

From the album *Amour*, published by Vollard, 1898–99:

22. *Les Attitudes sont faciles et chastes*
 Color lithograph
 Image 38.4 x 27.6 (15 1/8 x 10 7/8)
 The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

23. *Elle était plus belle que les rêves*
 (She was more beautiful than dreams)
 Color lithograph
 Image 40.5 x 28.7 (16 x 11 1/4)
 The Art Institute of Chicago, John H. Wrenn Memorial
 Collection



19 Maurice Denis, *Tendresse*. The University of Iowa
 Museum of Art.

- * 24. *Sur le Canapé d'argent pâle*
 (On the pale silver sofa)
 Color lithograph
 Image 40.5 x 28.7 (16 x 11 1/4)
 The Art Institute of Chicago, John H. Wrenn Memorial
 Collection

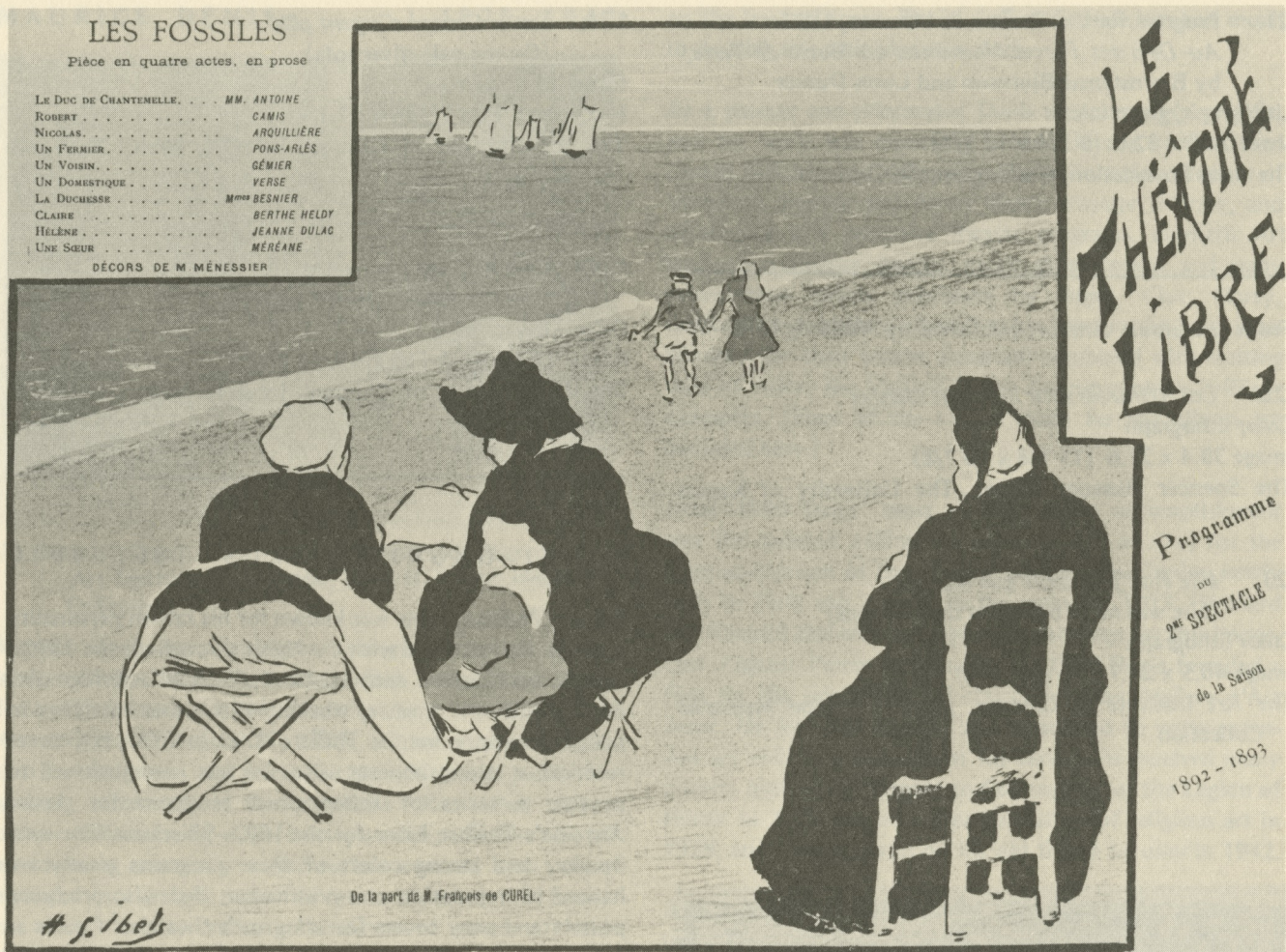
- * 25. *La Vie devient précieuse, discrète*
 (Life becomes precious, discreet)
 Color lithograph
 Image 27.3 x 40.4 (10 3/4 x 15 7/8)
 The Art Institute of Chicago, John H. Wrenn Memorial
 Collection

HENRI-GABRIEL IBELS 1867-1936

A born Parisian, Ibels was known for his raffish personality and wit. He exhibited with the Nabis throughout the 1890s, and he participated enthusiastically in Nabi activities connected with the theatre, working with other members in painting scenery for the Théâtre d'Art in 1891. His career received a strong impetus when he was commissioned to provide a series of lithographed programs for André Antoine's Théâtre Libre for the 1892–93 season. The vivid imagery and strong colors of these programs greatly enhanced his reputation as a printmaker. Ibels also produced posters and song covers featuring such theatrical figures as Yvette Guilbert, Irma Perrot, and Mévisto; these brought him notice outside of France while he was still in his twenties. Ibels was fascinated by the image of Pierrot; the bitter-sweet theme of Pierrot's adventures appeared frequently in the works of Symbolist poets (Verlaine and Jules Laforgue, for example) and in fin-de-siècle theatre productions.

In many of his paintings and prints Ibels stressed his feelings about the social conditions of his time; he provided graphic art for many socialist-anarchist periodicals. His observation of Parisians in their favorite haunts—cafés, theatres, the circus and the street fair—is akin to that of Daumier and Toulouse-Lautrec. Lautrec actually was a close friend, and together they prepared twenty-two lithographs showing favorite performers for the album *Le Café-Concert*, published by André Marty, with a cover by Ibels (31).

Strong political sympathies at the time of the infamous Dreyfus Affair led Ibels to devote much of his energy to a pro-Dreyfus periodical, *Le Sifflet*, which he founded in 1898. After 1900 Ibels continued to produce illustrations and posters, to paint, to work in various capacities for the theatre, and to serve as a writer and teacher of art and art history. He was awarded the Legion of Honor in 1913.



27 Henri-Gabriel Ibels, Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1892–93. The Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.

26. *Pierrot et Colombine*, 1892
Lithograph, green ink, from the album *L'Amour s'amuse*
Image 19 x 17 (7 1/2 x 6 5/8)
Private collection

*27. Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1892–93
Les Fossiles, by François de Curel
Color lithograph
Sheet 23.6 x 32 (9 3/8 x 12 5/8)
The Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.

28. Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1892–93
Boubouroche and *Valet de Coeur*, by Georges
Courteline and Maurice Vaucaire
Color lithograph
Sheet 23.6 x 31.6 (9 3/8 x 12 1/2)
Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Collinson

29. Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1892–93
Les Tisserands, by Gerhart Hauptmann
Color lithograph
Sheet 23.6 x 31.6 (9 3/8 x 12 1/2)
The Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.

*30. Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1892–93
La Belle au Bois Rêvant, *Mariage d'Argent*, *Ahasvère*,
by Fernand Mazade, Eugène Bourgeois, and Herman
Heyermans
Color lithograph
Sheet 23.6 x 31.6 (9 3/8 x 12 1/2)
The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas



*31. Cover for the album *Le Café-Concert*, 1893
Color lithograph
Sheet 44.4 x 33 (17 1/2 x 13)
Private collection

32. *Kam-Hill*, 1893
Lithograph, from the album *Le Café-Concert*
Sheet 43.1 x 29.2 (17 x 11 1/2)
Private collection

33. *Girl by a Stream*, n. d.
Lithograph, sanguine ink
Image 27.5 x 17.5 (10 7/8 x 6 7/8)
Private collection

37 Henri-Gabriel Ibels, Cover for the album "Le Café-Concert." Private Collection.

PROGRAMME DU 8^e SPECTACLE DE LA SAISON 1892-1893

LA BELLE AU BOIS RÉVANT
Comédie en vers

Magali	M ^{lle} CLEM
Sylvais	M. L. MIRAMON
Petrus	MM. PONS-ARLÈS
Le Lieutenant	ANYOT

MARIAGE D'ARGENT
Pièce en un acte, en prose

Le père Baudruc	MM. AROUILLÈRE
Pierre	GÉMIER
Marie	M ^{lle} IRMA PERROT

AHASVÈRE
Drame en un acte, en prose

Karalyk	MM. ANTOINE
Piotr le fils	DEPAS
Le Pope	GÉMIER
Un Paysan	MICHELEZ
Le Chef des Cosaques	AROUILLÈRE
La Mère	M ^{lle} BARNY
La Grand'mère	REYNOLD
Kasja, servante	VINET

De la part de MM. Fernand Mazade, Eugène Bourgeois et Herman Heysmans.

30 Henri-Gabriel Ibels, Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1892-93.



34 Aristide Maillol, *Adam and Eve*. The Art Institute of Chicago, Albert Roullier Memorial.

Maillol, after his early studies at Perpignan, came to Paris from the south of France in 1881 and spent five dreary years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Although he was to gain his fame as a sculptor, in his early years he thought of himself principally as a painter. He learned to admire the art of Puvis de Chavannes, and he copied line for line Puvis' *The Poor Fisherman* in order to learn something of its style. When Maillol saw the works of Gauguin at the Café Volpini in 1889 he felt that he had experienced a revelation about painting, and his own talent began to unfold.

Maillol was introduced to other artists of the Nabi circle by József Rippl-Rónai in 1893. He found a similarity of interests, and there was a mutual exchange of ideas. Maillol had found work painting scenery for Maurice Bouchor's marionette theatre, and he had also become interested in medieval tapestry. Several of the Nabis—Ranson, Lacombe, Rippl-Rónai—were interested in designing tapestries; Maillol went so far as to set up a tapestry studio in his native town, Banyuls. He exhibited with the Nabis through the 1890s, and he experimented widely, making a variety of decorative objects. He began to concentrate on sculpture seriously at the end of the decade, partly because eyestrain prevented him from continuing with painting and tapestry. Vollard gave him his first one-artist exhibition in 1902.

Maillol's graphic art was not extensive until the last decades of his life, when he made numerous woodcuts and some lithographs and etchings to illustrate fine editions of Virgil, Longus, Ovid, Verhaeren, Verlaine, and Ronsard. J.S.

*34. *Adam and Eve*, n. d.

Lithograph

Image 28.2 x 37.8 (11 1/8 x 14 7/8)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Albert Roullier Memorial

Paul Ranson was born in Limoges, son of the mayor. He received his early art training at the schools of decorative arts in Limoges and Paris. Although all the Nabis were interested in decorative arts, Ranson was the only one specifically trained in it.

Both Ranson and his wife, France, were products of free-thinking, radical-socialist backgrounds. In 1889 his family took up residence in Paris at 25 rue de Montparnasse, formerly the home of Mme de Maintenon. This house served Ranson as a studio as well and became the gathering place for his Nabi friends. France became the group's muse, the "Light of the Temple."

Ranson had a marionette theater in his house and frequently produced amateur theatricals with puppets designed by him, carved by sculptor Georges Lacombe, and dressed by France. In 1892, Maeterlinck's *Sept Princesses* was performed with the marionettes, featuring the Ransons and Sérusier reading the leading roles. Ranson wrote a play, *L'Abbé Prout, Guignol pour les Vieux Enfants*, published in 1902, based on an iconoclastic character developed in the course of Saturday skits with the other Nabis.



35 Paul Ranson, *Tigre dans les jungles*. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the Print Club of Cleveland.



37 Paul Ranson, *La Liseuse étendue*.

Ranson is closely associated with the Art Nouveau style, and its strong, sinuous lines. His magnificent lithograph *Tigre dans les jungles* (35) combines an influence from Japanese art with broad, curving Art Nouveau lines. With many of the Nabis, Ranson exhibited at Samuel Bing's First Salon of Art Nouveau in 1895. Ranson and his friends were intrigued with medieval tapestries such as those at Angers. Ranson designed several cartoons for tapestries, and France needlepointed them on canvas. The *Tigre* was made into a tapestry by the Savonnerie factory in 1910.

In 1908, Ranson founded the Académie Ranson, an art school based on the principles of Nabi art, with Bonnard, Denis, Maillol, Sérusier, and Vallotton among the teachers. After Paul Ranson's untimely death in 1909, France was forced to supervise its operation, and the school—jokingly called the "académie de France" by the Nabis—prospered. D.B.

*35. *Tigre dans les jungles*, 1893

Color lithograph, from *L'Estampe originale*

Image 36.8 x 28.5 (14 1/2 x 11)

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the Print Club of Cleveland

36. *Jeune Femme à l'Eventail*, 1895

(Young Woman with a Fan)

Lithograph, published by *La Revue Blanche*

Image 16.9 x 7.8 (6 5/8 x 3 1/8)

The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

*37. *La Liseuse étendue*, 1895

(Woman Reading, Reclining)

Color lithograph, published by *La Revue Blanche*

Image 15.3 x 24.5 (6 x 9)

Private Collection

Rippl-Rónai, born in Kaposvár, studied in Munich in his early twenties, and came to Paris in 1887. There he took painting lessons from the Hungarian realist Mihály Munkácsy. Growing bored with the conservative and anecdotal naturalism of his teacher's style, he sought something more modern. In 1889 he was in Pont-Aven in Brittany, and although he did not meet Gauguin until a year or so later, it has been assumed that he absorbed ideas from the development of Synthetism at Pont-Aven. By 1890 he was painting in an arresting manner, with simple forms surrounded by undulating but abbreviated and summarizing lines, a somber palette of dark blues and browns, and a quiet, orderly composition. Some of his works in the early years of the decade reveal the influence of James McNeill Whistler, and of Eugène Carrière.

According to Thadée Natanson, publisher of *La Revue Blanche*, members of the Nabi group sought to meet the foreign artist when they became aware that he was producing paintings which were akin in style and subject to their own. Rippl-Rónai had come to their attention through a one-artist exhibition at the Austrian/Hungarian Embassy in Paris in March, 1892. The critic Raoul Sertat mentioned his work in a review in the *Revue Encyclopédique* in June, 1892. He linked the artist with the Symbolist movement, and suggested that his distinction lay in "his preoccupation with the mystery of the shadow. . . the human aspects of quiet, intimate family life, in the sorrows and griefs, the crushing force of sadness."

Rippl-Rónai's *Woman and Lamp*, (38) published in *La Revue Blanche* in August, 1894, and then in the *Album de La Revue Blanche*, has the daring simplifications and "intimist" feeling of other Nabi work. Paul Gauguin appears to have been an influence on the composition, which is similar to Gauguin's *Portrait of Jacob Meyer de Haan*, 1899, a work which Rippl-Rónai had undoubtedly seen, since it hung in an inn in Pont-Aven. The young lady reading near the lamp in Rippl-Rónai's lithograph is perhaps Lazarine, a French girl with whom he fell in love while he was in Paris.

When Rippl-Rónai returned to Hungary to live after 1902, he continued to create art in a symbolist mood. He is considered to have made a strong contribution to the development of modern art in his own country, where he died in 1927.

*38. *Femme et lampe*, 1894

(Woman and Lamp)

Color lithograph, published by *La Revue Blanche*

Image 19.5 x 14.8 (7 5/8 x 5 7/8)

Professor and Mrs. Robert Anderson



38 József Rippl-Rónai, *Femme et lampe*. Collection of Professor and Mrs. Robert Anderson.

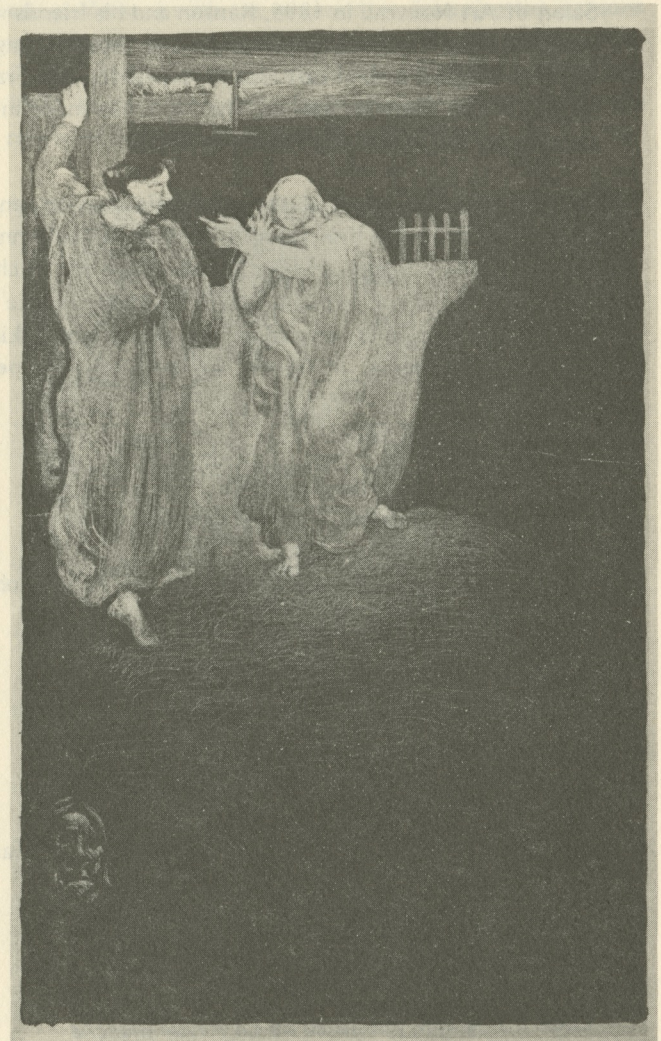
KER XAVIER ROUSSEL 1867–1927

Son of a prominent physician, Roussel was born in Lorraine; the family moved to Paris following the Franco-Prussian War. He developed a friendship with Vuillard at the Lycée Condorcet which lasted the rest of their lives. As art students they encouraged and supported one another, and Roussel married Vuillard's sister.

The art critic Albert Aurier, in an article titled "Les Symbolists" (*La Revue Encyclopédique*, April, 1892) found mystical qualities in Roussel's work, and saw in it the influence of Puvis de Chavannes. Roussel's first lithograph was a portrait of Vuillard in 1892; although he did not produce a large number of prints in the 1890s, he seemed to have a natural understanding of the medium, and the prints he made had striking variety and originality. (In one lithograph of 1893 a scene set in a butcher's shop was printed in blood-red on "butcher paper.") His *Deux Femmes Conversant* (39) was bound into the *Revue Blanche* (September 15, 1893) and also issued in the *Petite Suite de la Revue Blanche*. In this charming lithograph a delicate but

assured line creates curling patterns of tree foliage, balustrades, and figures of the two women. There is no shading or depth; the space is indicated by superimposed layers which nevertheless hold together as a two-dimensional decoration of the page. A completely different style appears in Roussel's *Noli me tangere* which appeared in the pages of the *Revue Blanche* the following year (April, 1894, and then in the *Album de la Revue Blanche*, 1895). Here the page is conceived as inky-black, and the figures emerge from its depths. Dark and mysterious, this lithograph has puzzled scholars, since the apprehensive mood scarcely seems to fit the moment (indicated by the title) when Mary Magdalene approaches Christ on the first Easter morning. Pierre Georgel, in catalogue notes for Roussel's centenary exhibition in Paris in 1968, suggested that this work may have been an influence on Edvard Munch, also connected with the *Revue Blanche* when he was in Paris.

Roussel's ability to design two-dimensional images composed of lyrical color touches is evident in the lithographs



40 Ker Xavier Roussel, *Noli me tangere*.

for the album *Paysages* commissioned by Vollard, but never completed (represented here by 41, 42, 43). Figures shimmer and float in lush landscape settings; these works are distinguished by unusual harmonies of exquisite color.

Roussel made few prints between 1900 and about 1926. He occupied himself with paintings including many large-scale wall decorations utilizing themes vaguely taken from classical mythology. Fauns, nymphs, and centaurs perform a perpetual dance through what seem to be French meadows, as though he envisioned a second golden age. In the last twenty years of his life he gave more time to evocative and sometimes astonishingly dynamic lithographs and etchings; *Personnages au bord de la mer* (44) gives some indication of this later work. J.S.

- *39. *Deux Femmes conversant*, or *La Terrasse*, 1893
(Two Women Conversing, also known as
The Terrace)

Lithograph, published by *La Revue Blanche*

Image 18 x 8.5 (7 x 3 1/4)

The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

- *40. *Noli me tangere*, 1894

Lithograph, published by *La Revue Blanche*

Image 22.5 x 14 (8 3/4 x 5 1/2)

Private collection

For the projected album *Paysages*, commissioned by
Vollard, but not completed, c. 1900:

- *41. *Femme en robe à rayures*
(Woman in a Striped Dress)

Color lithograph

Image 21.0 x 32.3 (8 1/4 x 12 3/4)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Print and Drawing
Club

42. *Amours jouant auprès d'une nymphe*
(Cupids Playing near a Nymph)

Color lithograph

Image 21.0 x 33.4 (8 1/4 x 13 1/8)

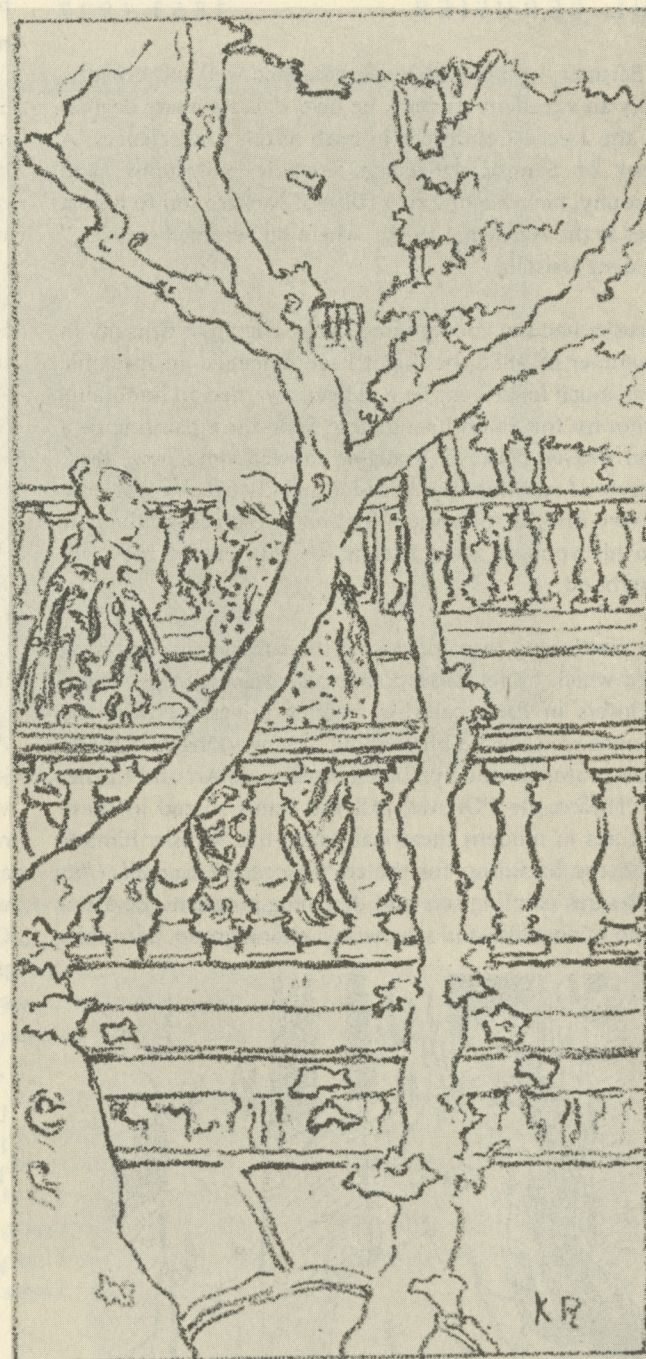
The Art Institute of Chicago

43. *La Source*

Color lithograph

Image 31.4 x 41.0 (12 3/8 x 16 1/8)

The Art Institute of Chicago, William McCallin McKee
Memorial



39 Ker Xavier Roussel, *Deux Femmes conversant*, or *La Terrasse*.

44. *Personnages au bord de la mer*, 1927
(Figures on the Shore)

Etching, sanguine ink

Image 15 x 22.2 (5 7/8 x 8 3/4)

Private collection

Paul Sérusier, born in 1863, was educated well and broadly. Always an excellent student, he held baccalaureate degrees from the Lycée Condorcet in both letters and sciences. A student of Semitic languages, esoteric philosophy, and Theosophy, he brought a rich cultural background to his art studies at the Académie Julian, where he became “massier,” or student assistant.

If Sérusier had not encountered Paul Gauguin in Brittany in the summer of 1888, he might have remained an academic painter much longer, for he had been awarded an honorable mention by the Salon jury of that year for a painting of a Breton weaver. However, Gauguin showed him a new, idealistic style of painting, and Sérusier quickly became not only a convert, but the spokesman for and interpreter of the new art to his younger artist friends, the nucleus of the Nabi brotherhood.

While continuing to paint during the summers in Brittany, toward which he felt a deep, mystical attachment, he spent his winters in Paris painting, making prints for the little magazines which were burgeoning, and working as a theatrical decorator for the Symbolist Théâtre de'Art and Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. All the Nabis shared in these adventures in modern theatrical décor, but Sérusier himself painted the backdrop for the era's *succès de scandale*, *Ubu Roi*. Besides painting sets and designing programs, he often acted in minor roles and sang with a choral group. Sérusier's



45 Paul Sérusier, *Woman in Mountain Forest*. The St. Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope

Polish actress-lover, Gabriela Zapolska, can be found mentioned in two of the exhibited theater programs.

Sérusier elaborated Gauguin's principles into a mystic and neo-Platonic theory of harmony in line and color. His small book, *L'ABC de la Peinture*, expounds these interests in color theory and geometrical purity, adding ideas about warm and cool grays, the chromatic circle, and sacred measures. Sérusier's concerns with geometric harmony and sacred art stem not from his earlier influences—Gauguin, Schuré, Swedenborg, Theosophy and literary Symbolism—but from the school of sacred art at the Benedictine monastery of Beuron in Germany. Sérusier's student, Jan Verkade, took holy orders there, and introduced him to Père Didier of Beuron and his theories, which Sérusier translated into French and published in 1905.

After 1900, Sérusier taught painting at the Académie Ranson with several of his old Nabi brothers, and continued to live in his beloved Brittany, where he felt that he had been “reborn in spirit.” After marrying one of his students in 1912, he lived there quietly until his death in 1927.

Although he had many pupils, his influence was one of ideas rather than style. Critics questioned whether his canvases, so often rigorous expositions of his theories, could be regarded as paintings at all. Yet Maurice Denis continued to acknowledge his own obligation to Sérusier, insisting that it was through Sérusier's intellect and enthusiasm that Gauguin's revolution had reached the world, and that his position between the Symbolists and the Cubists was a central one, and not to be overlooked.

*45. *Woman in Mountain Forest*, 1894

Lithograph

Image 17.2 x 11.5 (6 3/4 x 4 5/8)

The St. Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope

*46. Program for Théâtre Libre, 1893–94

L'Assomption de Hannele Mattern and *En*

l'Attendant by Gerhart Hauptmann, and J. Thorel and L. Roux

Color lithograph

Sheet 31.7 x 23.5 (12 1/2 x 9 1/4)

Collection of the Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.

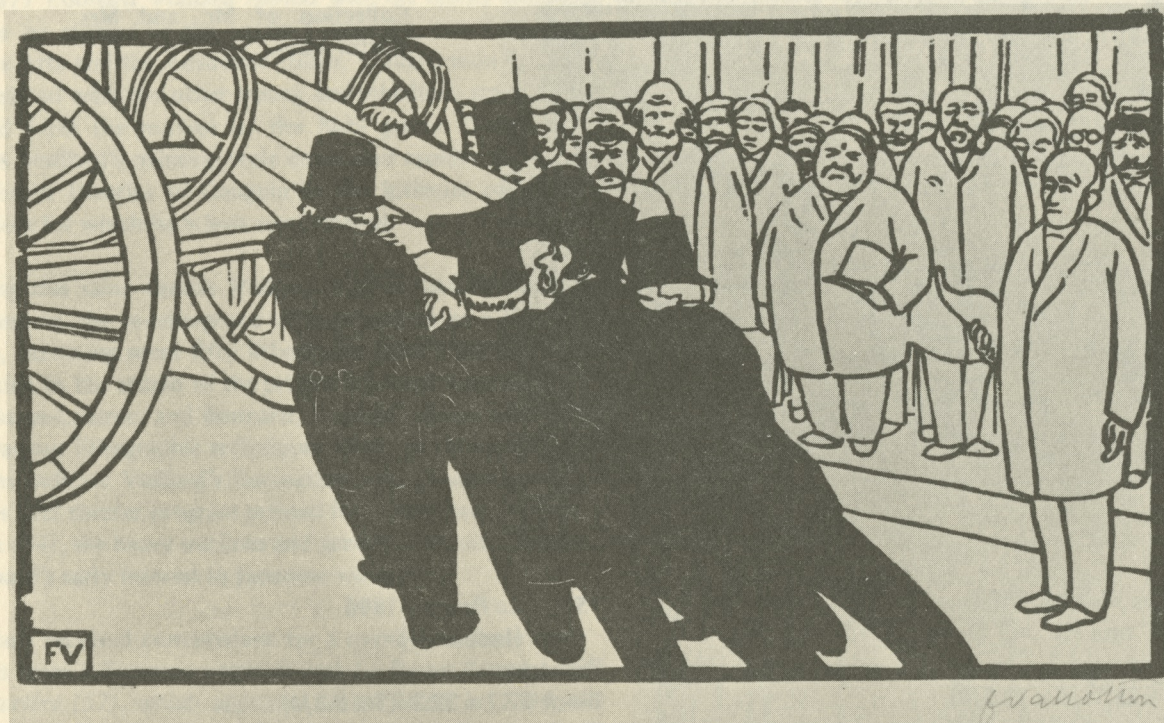
47. Program for Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, 1896

Hérakléa by Auguste Villeroz

Color lithograph

Sheet 32.4 x 25.8 (12 3/4 x 10 1/4)

Collection of the Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.



48 Félix Vallotton, *Les Nécrophores*.

Born in the Swiss town of Lausanne, Félix Vallotton moved to Paris in 1882 to study at the Académie Julian. He was not a founding member of the Nabis circle, and was never particularly in tune with the group's idealistic spirit. Vallotton was somewhat of an outsider to Nabi thought, a fact reflected in his tendency to deal, in his woodcuts and lithographs, with subjects such as riots, murders, and executions. He took a much harsher view of reality than the other Nabis and produced some of the most dramatic pictorial statements on civic unrest and social problems during the period.

Vallotton exhibited in the Salon de la Rose+Croix in 1892 as did Sérusier; later he participated in the Nabi exhibitions. He shared the Nabi interest in Japanese prints and the revival of woodcuts. Best known for a series of woodcuts done during 1891–1901, he gave up graphics almost entirely after that period. At that time, he experimented with woodcut techniques and chose to cut the side rather than the end of the wood blocks. This allowed for greater ease of expression of curved lines but reduced detail. Vallotton turned this into an asset and began producing prints which are dramatic contrasts of flat black and white. His radical simplifications draw the subject and ground to the front plane, flattening them in the manner of Japanese prints. In his famous *La Paresse* (52) this lack of perspective and stark contrast are most impressive, with the figure and setting creating a dazzlingly decorative effect.

In 1899, Vallotton married the daughter of an important Paris art dealer, Bernheim, and settled down to a bourgeois existence of a type he had previously ridiculed. Besides painting and producing prints, Vallotton was a writer and playwright. His best-known work, *La Vie meurtrière*, was published in 1927, two years after his death.

Vallotton and the Nabis were united by a common interest in elevating the status of graphic art. A fitting image for their conception of the role of the printmaker can be seen in the advertisement for *L'Estampe originale* on Vallotton's program for Strindberg's *Père* (51): the artist, absorbed in examining his latest effort, stands haloed by the spoke-like arms of the lithographic press. D.B.

- *48. *Les Nécrophores*, 1892
(The Pallbearers)

Woodcut

Block 14.2 x 25.4 (5 5/8 x 10)

The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas

49. *Service d'information, Le Renseignement*, 1893
(The Inquiry)

Lithograph

Image 17.5 x 11.6 (6 7/8 x 4 5/8)

The St. Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope



51 Félix Vallotton, Program for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, 1894. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Atlas.

50. *Le Bon Marché*, 1893
(The "Bon Marché" Department Store)

Woodcut

Block 20.2 x 25.7 (8 x 10 3/4)

The University of Michigan Museum of Art

*52. *La Paresse*, 1896
(Indolence)

Woodcut

Block 17.7 x 22.2 (7 x 8 3/4)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Joseph Brooks Fair Collection

*51. Program for Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, 1894
Père by Auguste Strindberg

Lithograph

Image 24.4 x 31.1 (9 5/8 x 12 1/2)

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Atlas

53. *Portrait of Puvis de Chavannes*, 1898

Woodcut, published in *Studio*

Block 15.7 x 12.5 (6 1/4 x 4 7/8)

Private Collection



52. Félix Vallotton, *La Paresse*. The Art Institute of Chicago, Joseph Brooks Fair Collection.

In 1877 Edouard Vuillard moved with his family to Paris where he studied at the Lycée Condorcet, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian. Vuillard soon became acquainted with the other young and rebellious artists who would form the nucleus of the Nabi group. During the 1890s Vuillard's painting style developed rapidly from the Synthetist theories of Gauguin to the intimate patterned interiors for which he is best remembered.

During this same decade Vuillard made substantial contributions to the re-emergence of printmaking as a fine art form, executing some fifty lithographs from 1890 to 1900. Working in the studio of the printer Edouard Ancourt with Toulouse-Lautrec and Bonnard, Vuillard quickly mastered the various lithographic techniques. Many of his early lithographs indicate Vuillard's fascination with Japanese prints. In his first theater program printed for Lugné-Poe's Théâtre Libre (54), the heavy outlines and spatial ambiguity parallel Bonnard's early interest in Japanese woodcuts.

Vuillard received commissions for a number of these early prints from *L'Estampe originale* and *La Revue Blanche*. *La Couturière* (57), which appeared in the latter in 1894, is typical of the timeless and quiet domestic scenes that appear so often in his paintings of this period. An extremely rare and seldom exhibited Vuillard lithograph, *Jeune Femme accoudée* (56), includes one of his surprising shadowy figures hovering almost unseen in the background.

Between 1893 and 1897, Vuillard created a number of programs for Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. Four of these programs are double sheets that also include advertisements for *La Revue Blanche*. Programs such as *La Vie Muette* (55) expertly translate the various moods of the Symbolist plays for which they were created.

By far the most important patron of Vuillard's lithographs was Ambroise Vollard who commissioned *Paysages et Intérieurs*, a series of twelve lithographs plus a cover. Technically these lithographs are often quite complex—*Terrasse de café, la nuit* (62) utilizes six stones. As a nighttime outdoor scene the subject is unusual in Vuillard's lithographic oeuvre. Admired today for their subtle Symbolist overtones as well as their freshness of color, these lithographs remain a hallmark of lithography in the 1890s and are a fitting testimony to Vuillard's virtuosity as a printmaker.

After 1900 Vuillard executed only a few lithographs and none in color. His painting style became more conservative and for the remainder of his long career, he primarily painted the portraits of middle-class patrons. A.W.



54 Edouard Vuillard, Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1890–91. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Atlas.

*54. Program for the Théâtre Libre, 1890–91
L'Amant de sa Femme, Monsieur Bute, La Belle Opération by Aurélien Scholl, Maurice Biollay, and Julien Sermet

Color lithograph
Sheet 21.5 x 19 (8 3/8 x 7 1/4)
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Atlas

55. Program for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, 1894
La Vie Muette by Maurice Beaubourg

Lithograph
Sheet 31 x 24 (12 x 9 5/8)
Collection of the Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.



56 Edouard Vuillard, *Jeune Femme accoudée*. The St. Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope.

- *56. *Jeune Femme accoudée*, 1894
(Young Woman Leaning on her Elbow)

Lithograph

Image 17.5 x 12.5 (6 7/8 x 4 7/8)

The St. Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Horace M. Swope

57. *La Couturière*, 1895
(The Seamstress)

Color lithograph, published by *La Revue Blanche*

Image 25.8 x 16.5 (9 3/4 x 6 1/2)

The University of Michigan Museum of Art

- *58. Program for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, 1897
Au delà des Forces Humaines (part II) by
Bjornstjerne-Bjornson

Lithograph

Sheet 23 x 31 (9 3/8 x 12)

Collection of The Atlas Foundation, Washington, D.C.

From the album *Paysages et Intérieurs*, published by
Vollard, 1899:

- *59. *L'Avenue*

Color lithograph

Image 31.2 x 41.2 (12 1/4 x 16 1/4)

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Hanna Fund

- *60. *Intérieur aux tentures roses, I*
(Interior with Pink Wallpaper I)

Color lithograph

Image 34.7 x 27.2 (14 x 11 1/4)

The University of Michigan Museum of Art.

- *61. *L'Atre*

(The Hearth)

Color lithograph

Image 34 x 27.5 (13 3/8 x 10 3/4)

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Hanna Fund

62. *Terrasse de café, la nuit (La Pâtisserie)*
(Café Terrace at Night)

Color lithograph

Image 35.5 x 27 (14 x 10 5/8)

The St. Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Daniel Fitzpatrick

63. *Les Deux Belles—Soeurs*
(The Two Sisters-in-law)

Color lithograph

Image 35.5 x 29 (13 7/8 x 11 3/8)

Nelson Gallery—Atkins Museum, Acquired through the
Anonymous Fund

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