

**Paul Cézanne** (1839 –1906) was a French artist and Post-Impressionist Grand Master, whose work laid the foundations of the transition from the 19th-century conception of artistic endeavour (realism) to a new and radically different world of art in the 20th century (mind's eye). Cézanne's often repetitive, exploratory brushstrokes are highly characteristic and clearly recognizable. He used planes of color and small brushstrokes, which build up to form complex fields. The paintings convey Cézanne's intense study of his subjects. Inasmuch as the phenomenon of optics ruled his style, Cézanne can be said to form the bridge between late 19th-century Impressionism and the early 20th-century's new line of artistic enquiry, Cubism. Both Matisse and Picasso are said to have remarked that Cézanne, after all, "is the father of us all."

*Lifetime output of prints:* 8 -- five etchings and three lithographs (two in color, one in B&W)

**“Portrait of Guillaumin with the Hanged Man”** is Cézanne’s second etching (1873). Famously, Cézanne had to be coaxed into printmaking in the first place, most notably by fellow artists Camille Pissarro and Armand Guillaumin, both Impressionist painters and printmakers of notoriety. The third ‘lobbyist’ was Dr. Gachet, a French physician most famous for treating the painter Vincent van Gogh during his last weeks in Auvers-sur-Oise. Gachet was a great supporter of artists and of the Impressionist movement. In fact, he himself was an amateur painter and etcher, signing his works "Paul van Ryssel" (literally, ‘Paul of Lille’ in Dutch). The tiny hanged man in the upper-left corner of the etching is a reference to a Cézanne painting “The Hanged Man’s House,” done at Auvers-sur-Oise, the country town wherein Gachet lived.

### **History of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Master Prints**

Starting in 1860, and coming into full force by 1890, there was a revival in printmaking in both London and Paris, an artform that had fallen out of favor since the glory days of Rembrandt. By 1890, the print revival was sweeping Paris and London by storm, supported by the newly widespread popularity of poster art and the invention of new lithographic inks, which made drawing on stones produce works of vivid color -- something the Impressionists required in the re-established medium. As for B&W prints, so many new techniques were being advanced that prints became a kind of nuanced and refined multiple ‘ink drawing,’ if you will. Furthermore, art dealers, notably Ambrose Vollard (publisher of *The Album of Painter-Engravers*) and Durand Ruel, began pressing their stables to create works in print media like etching and lithography that were more affordable to entry-level collectors. Ruel went so far as to underwrite print-only exhibitions at his famed gallery. Finally, enough cannot be said about the influence of the art patron Dr. Paul Gachet, M.D. -- who, being an amateur etcher himself, practically forced each artist who visited him to try their hands at printmaking! Gachet is ever famous for having cared for van Gogh in the last months of his life, and for van Gogh’s famous painting of Gachet.\*

\***Portrait of Dr. Gachet** is one of the most revered paintings by the Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh. It depicts Dr. Paul Gachet who took care of Van Gogh during the final months of his life. There are two authenticated versions of the portrait, both painted in June 1890 at Auvers-sur-Oise, Gachet’s country hometown. One is in a private collection and the other, at the Orsay Museum in Paris. Both show Gachet sitting at a table and leaning his head on his right arm, but they are easily differentiated in color and style.

In 1990, the first version fetched a record price of \$82.5 million (\$75 million, plus a 10 percent buyer's commission) when sold at auction in New York. When accounting for inflation, this is still the *highest price* paid for art at a public auction!

Here is a summary of the major shows dealing with the 1890 print revival in Paris:

*General Exhibition of Lithography, École de Beaux Arts, Paris, 1891, a thousand prints on view*

*Centenary Exhibition of Lithography, Champs de Mars, Paris, 1895\*\**

\*\*Lithography was invented in 1796 by German author and actor Alois Senefelder, as a thrifty method of publishing theatrical works. Thus, 1895 would be the centenary of the medium