

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841 – 1919) was a French artist, and a Grand Master of the Impressionist style -- along with Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, and Degas. As a celebrant of beauty, and especially feminine sensuality, it has been said that "Renoir is the final representative of a tradition which runs directly from Rubens to Watteau." Like Cézanne, his masterpieces may range to a variety of subjects, but he is perhaps best known for his bathers. He is also revered for his sensitive lithographs of family members. He deployed lithography in many cases to capture the soft-edged aura of love he had for family in 'liquid' strokes, reminiscent of Asian calligraphy, so in vogue at the time in Europe (aka: *Japonisme*). He was more at home drawing on stones than the copper plate, and his lithographs look like brush-and-ink drawings. Ambroise Vollard was Renoir's print-dealer of choice, the former of whom published many *livres d'artiste* with cover-art and tipped-in original prints by Renoir.

Lifetime output of prints: 55 (etchings, lithographs)

"Femme nue couchée (tournée à droite)," 2nd plate (i.e., with alterations made by the artist based on the 1st plate) -- etching (1909). A third plate also exists. The 2nd-plate etching was first published in the deluxe edition of the book *L'histoire des peintres-Impressionnistes* by Theodore Duret (Paris, *Floury*, 1906), and later in Duret's *Die Impressionisten*, (Berlin, *B. Cassirer*, 1909) and in *Nus de Renoir* (Paris, *Bernheim-Jeune Gallery*, 1923). Public collections include: *Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris; *Kupferstich-Kabinett*, Berlin. The original copper plate was preserved -- the reason why DRFA also has on offer a much less costly 'restrike' of the image.

"Femme nue assise," (1906), soft-ground etching, first published in the famous *L'histoire des peintres-impressionnistes* by T. Duret, (Paris, *Floury*, p. 108) on pale cream laid hollande paper. It is related to a famous painting in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA. In 1909, pages in *Die Impressionisten*, by Duret (Berlin, *B. Cassirer*) featured not only the print but a reproduction of the etching plate, which still exists. Other publications: *Kunst und Künstler, Jahrgang VIII*, facing page 285. The paper used for all, in its one and only state, contains a watermark made for Renoir of a nude standing in an archway.

Soft-ground etching is achieved when the artist draws onto the plate through a piece of wax paper that has soft wax on its underside. When the paper is removed from the plate, wax pulls off of it only where the drawn lines are. Furthermore, tiny bits of wax do remain behind within the lines, giving a stippled quality to the print. The plate can be etched, thereafter, as the acid will not bite into the wax, but only into the lines exposing the copper plate. "Renoir used this process to render the voluptuous models he favored in tonal, velvety lines, at times thick and black with ink, or dappled, and at others, muted to a soft gray. With soft-ground etching, Renoir obtained results equivalent to those he achieved in painting with flat brush-marks in harmonious contrast. These types of etchings possess all the innocent and joyful sensuality of his canvases.

"Buste d'enfant, tourné à droite," (c. 1908) only state, as later published in T. Duret's *Die Impressionisten* (Berlin, *Bruno Cassirer*, 1914). The model is Renoir's younger son Claude, who was a favorite subject of the master, and often mistaken for a girl, given the

long-hair and dress-like jumpers for boys that were popular in the 19th century. So few impressions were pulled by the artist in 1908, that by 1914 -- the date of *this* tirage -- the plate was still in pristine condition. The image was printed again in 1920 -- in a special printing of 200 copies of the 4th edition of Duret's *Die Impressionisten*. The copper plate still exists and was long owned by Duret, himself. Public collections include: *Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris* and *Bibliothèque de l'Université de Paris*.

“Ambroise Vollard,” lithograph (1904), and thereafter, included in the famous *Vollard Suite* by Renoir (1919): 12 original lithographs from plates executed by the artist in 1904 - '05 in folios numbering 1,000 -- 1 - 50 on Japon paper and 51 - 1,000 on vellum, of which DRFA's is a vellum exemplar. The stones were all cancelled/destroyed after the publication of the folios. Public collections include: *Kupferstich-Kabinett, Dresden; Bibliothèque National, Paris; Art Institute of Chicago; Boston Public Library; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC; New York Public Library; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C; Philadelphia Museum of Art*. As an homage to his famous Parisian art dealer, Renoir selected this image to be the first collation in the suite of 12.

(The 50 sets on Japon were hand-signed by Vollard, as well as the artist, evidence of their close collaboration and friendship. Vollard would even go so far as to write two critical memoirs of the life and works of Renoir. Vollard is also remembered for his 1937 autobiography, *Recollections of a Picture Dealer*, a best-seller and everywhere read by members of today's art world, as well.)

“Claude Renoir, tourné à gauche,” litho stone of 1904, again included in the *Vollard Suite* of 1919. This is a most tender rendition of the artist's younger son. Public collections include those *ibid*. The stone, not only cancelled, but destroyed after publication. Vellum exemplar, one of 950. Note the translucency of the tones in this work, communicating tender-hearted affection via the use of soft, ethereal gradations.

“The Stone with Three Sketches,” *Vollard Suite*, one of 50 exemplars on Japon (1919) from the 1904 stone. Public collections include those *ibid*. The models are ‘Gabrielle,’ the Renoir household nanny, who later become a favorite model of P. A. Renoir's and Julie Manet, the daughter of Renoir's great friend, the painter Berthe Morisot. Julie Manet is so named because she was also the niece of her famous uncle Édouard Manet, issuing from his younger brother Eugene and Morisot. Julie Manet became a painter, as well. Morisot is famed for being one of the ‘big three’ of the Impressionist female painters (along with Bracquemond and Cassatt). Stone destroyed.

History of 19th-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