

## INDIANAPOLIS MUSEUM OF ART ACQUIRES PAUL GAUGUIN'S VOLPINI SUITE OF ZINCOGRAPHS

### *Portfolio of Gauguin prints enhances IMA's renowned Pont-Aven School collection*

**INDIANAPOLIS, IN**, March 12, 2009—The Indianapolis Museum of Art announced the acquisition of 11 zincographs by Paul Gauguin, one of the most important printmaking projects of 19th-century France. Collectively known as the “Volpini Suite,” the works were Gauguin’s first set of prints and were created at a pivotal point in Gauguin’s career, just a few months after the Pont-Aven sojourn where he developed the signature approach that defines his mature work. The prints were shown in 1889, in an independent exhibition at a small Parisian café owned by a man named Volpini. This event was the first public display of works from the Pont-Aven School.

Acquired from the collection of print connoisseur Samuel Josefowitz, Gauguin’s “Volpini Suite” enhances the Indianapolis Museum of Art’s already-robust collection of Pont-Aven works, which were acquired from the Josefowitz Collection a decade ago. The IMA’s Pont-Aven paintings form the most important collection of such works in North America, and the Museum’s 84-piece collection of prints by members of the Pont-Aven School is the finest in the world. The Pont-Aven School, which also included artists such as Emile Bernard, Paul Sérusier, Charles Laval, and Jan Verkade, was named for the small village in France’s westernmost province of Brittany where these progressive artists gathered during the 1880s and 1890s.

“The Museum’s mission to collect and preserve important works of art remains unchanged through good times and bad,” said Maxwell L. Anderson, The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the IMA. “The acquisition of this important set of prints is a strategic move for the IMA, fulfilling a carefully considered, long-term goal for IMA collection development.”

An estimated 30 to 50 sets of Gauguin’s Volpini prints exist. The 11 zincographs were created by a lithographic process on zinc plates, and were printed on large sheets of canary-yellow paper. The challenges of zincography proved appealing to Gauguin, who sought out the medium for its simple and often grainy textural effects and intensified the bold, rugged results of the medium with his choice of canary-yellow paper. Such experimental works on the part of Gauguin and other members of the Pont-Aven School served to advance their Synthetist style, which called for a fusion – or synthesis – of the artist’s subjective reaction to nature and his sense of design. This approach called for reinterpreting nature according to the artist’s imagination.

“The acquisition of Gauguin’s Volpini prints brings the IMA’s comprehensive Pont-Aven collection to a new level of excellence,” said Ellen W. Lee, The Wood-Pulliam Senior Curator at the IMA. “The Volpinis are fundamental to examining Gauguin’s rich imagination and versatile use of imagery, and they enrich our capacity to interpret the paintings and prints within the IMA collection. Complete portfolios rarely appear on the market, and this one is in impeccable condition, the paper brilliant and untrimmed.”

The range of subject matter in the Volpini Suite represents Gauguin’s thematic interests as well as his travels to Brittany, Arles and Martinique. The prints sustain “a level of

technical achievement remarkable for an artist who had never before worked in the medium. Gauguin became a master printmaker almost overnight" (Claire Frèches-Thory, "Brittany, 1886-1890," in *The Art of Paul Gauguin*, Chicago, 1988, p. 130). The subjects, motifs and style of the suite offer fascinating points of comparison to his paintings and serve as harbingers of the work Gauguin would create during the rest of his career.

### **Indianapolis Museum of Art**

The Indianapolis Museum of Art offers visitors an inclusive view of creativity through its collection of more than 54,000 works of art that span 5,000 years of history from across the world's continents. Encompassing 152 acres of gardens and grounds, the IMA is among the 10 largest encyclopedic art museums in the United States, and it features significant collections of African, American, Asian, European and contemporary art, as well as a newly established collection of design arts. The collections include paintings, sculpture, furniture and design objects, prints, drawings and photographs, as well as textiles and costumes.

Through its new articulation of the interconnectedness of art, design and nature, the IMA welcomes its visitors to experiences at the Museum, in 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, which will be the largest contemporary art park in the United States when it opens in 2010, and at Oldfields–Lilly House & Gardens, an historic Country Place Era estate on the IMA's grounds.

The IMA completed a \$74 million expansion project in May 2005. The construction added 164,000 square feet to the Museum and includes renovation of 90,000 square feet of existing space. In order to present major exhibitions of its own and to accommodate major traveling exhibitions, the expanded Museum was outfitted with new 10,000-plus-square-foot Clowes Special Exhibition Gallery on the Museum's first level. In November 2008, the IMA opened the renovated 600-seat Tobias Theater. Nicknamed "The Toby," the theater is a venue for talks, performances and films.

Located at 4000 Michigan Road, the IMA and Lilly House are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The IMA is closed Mondays and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days. For more information, call 317-923-1331 or visit [www.imamuseum.org](http://www.imamuseum.org).

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