

FACT SHEET

- Exhibition:** *Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's Letters to Émile Bernard*
- Press Preview:** Tuesday, September 25, 10 a.m. until noon
- Dates:** September 28, 2007, through January 6, 2008
- Summary:** Unseen by the public for nearly seventy years and never before exhibited, twenty letters from Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890, Dutch) to the artist and poet Émile Bernard (1868–1941, French) are the subject of an unprecedented exhibition on view only at The Morgan Library & Museum. Comprised of missives and artwork from the peak of van Gogh's creativity while he was living in the south of France (1888–1889), the exhibition offers a rare look at the life and creative process of the legendary master of modern art. Through these letters and a selection of twenty-two related paintings, watercolors and drawings by both artists, the exhibition explores in depth for the first time the important role of correspondence and exchange in how van Gogh thought about his work and communicated his progress to his contemporaries.

- Content:** *20 Never-before-exhibited Letters to Bernard; 1 letter to Gauguin*
- The extraordinary cache of letters to Bernard is unlike any of van Gogh's other known writings. Among his most honest and direct communications, these richly illustrated letters to his friend and colleague reveal everything from van Gogh's artistic methods to his emotional struggles to his sharp observations about daily life. Six of the letters include sixteen sketches for works including: *The Sower*, *View of Arles at Sunset*, *The Langlois Bridge*, and *Cottages at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer* (all 1888). Renowned collectors Eugene and Clare Thaw acquired nineteen of these twenty important letters in 2001 and made them a promised gift to the Morgan. An additional letter by van Gogh to the artist Paul Gauguin (French, 1848–1903), which was in Bernard's possession, is also included in the exhibition. It features a sketch for van Gogh's renowned *Bedroom at Arles* (1888) and is a promised gift to the Morgan by Mr. Thaw.

**22 Paintings, Watercolors & Drawings**

The letters are presented alongside related artwork, most of which has not recently been exhibited in the United States. Major works include van Gogh's *Olive Trees* (1889), and *Enclosed Field* (1889) and Bernard's *Breton Women in a Meadow* (1888) and *Madeleine au Bois d'Amour* (1888). Following the trajectory from letter to sketch to painted masterpiece, these letters and works illuminate the significance of Bernard's friendship at a key moment of van Gogh's career. On view are:

- **11 paintings** (6 by van Gogh, 4 by Bernard and 1 by Toulouse-Lautrec)
- **5 watercolors** (2 by van Gogh, 3 by Bernard)
- **6 drawings** by van Gogh

**Journals and Periodicals**

As the organizer of one of the first exhibitions of van Gogh's work in Paris and the author of several early, seminal articles on the artist, Bernard made a significant contribution to van Gogh's legacy. His efforts are explored through a selection of periodicals and publications included in the Morgan's exhibition. On view are: two early

editions of van Gogh's letters to Bernard published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; an original nineteenth century manuscript of an article on van Gogh; a late nineteenth century lithograph journal cover by Bernard and a woodcut by Bernard for the checklist of an 1892 van Gogh exhibition.

**Catalogue:**

The show is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue of van Gogh's letters to Bernard, written by Van Gogh Museum curator Leo Jansen and researchers Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker. The full-color, 384-page catalogue includes an essay on van Gogh and Bernard's relationship, a transcription and substantially annotated English translation of each letter, reproductions of works represented or mentioned in the letters, and facsimile reproductions of each letter. This is the most comprehensive, informative, and accurate publication of the Bernard letters. The hardcover catalogue, published collaboratively by the Morgan, Rizzoli International Publications and the Van Gogh Museum, is available at the Morgan Shop for \$50. The catalogue for this exhibition was made possible by a generous grant from the International Music and Art Foundation.

**Organization and Sponsors:**

*Painted with Words* is organized by Jennifer Tonkovich, Curator, Drawings and Prints, The Morgan Library & Museum.



Major support for *Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's Letters to Émile Bernard* and its accompanying catalogue was provided by the International Music and Art Foundation. Generous support was also provided by the Robert Lehman Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Education and Programs:**

The Morgan offers a number of special programs held in conjunction with its exhibitions. For more information, please contact the Education department at (212) 590-0333. A symposium devoted to van Gogh's letters to Bernard and Bernard's role in establishing the "legend" of van Gogh is planned for September 29, 2007. Panelists will include Morgan exhibition curator, Jennifer Tonkovich; catalogue authors Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker of the Van Gogh Museum.

**About the Morgan:**

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. Nearly a century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its new campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

**Hours and Location:**

Tuesday to Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Monday and Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

**Admission:**

Adults \$12; children (under 16) \$8; seniors (65 and over) \$8; students (with current ID) \$8; free to members and children 12 and under (must be accompanied by an adult). Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission to the McKim rooms is without charge during the following times: Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m.; Friday, 7 to 9 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 6 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

**General Information:**

(212) 685-0008 or [www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org)

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