

NEW EVIDENCE: Why did Vincent Van Gogh cut-off his ear? Gauguin, slept with Augustine Roulin, who was Van Gogh's lover. As an act of retribution, Van Gogh's ear was received, at the local brothel by Rachael Glancy, a prostitute. 2018



**Vincent Van Gogh
Le Bercuese. 1889**

16 X 20 inches

Watercolor on pink wove Ingres Paper

Inscribed: "Souvien Rose", lower left, signed, dated with Arles, on chair arm

Addison Thompson Collection NYC

Augustine Roulin was painted more than any other person in Van Gogh's Arles period. Previously, he painted her husband Joseph, a Postal baggage handler with "Socratic" attitudes. Later they both appear in a Gauguin sketch hanging out, at the Ginoux's Café, Bar & Brothel. Van Gogh was likely paying her for sex. Van Gogh came to Arles after a checkered past of failed relationships, with an addiction to prostitutes.

Joseph was transferring to Marseilles in early December. Augustine was temporarily left behind, this left her vulnerable to Vincent's love advances. In December, Van Gogh fantasized that Augustine could become his wife. The evidence of this obsession, was the La Berceuse series of paintings. The La Berceuse paintings make an altarpiece of 5 panels which show Augustine, aging from a teenager to an old woman.

Gauguin could be a highly critical and destabilizing artistic influence. Van Gogh had a "traditional artist" painting on location in nature vs. Gauguin who favored working in the studio, stealing famous art historical poses, compositions and tracing from photographs. Regardless, Vincent considered himself Gauguin's equal. Emile Bernard confirms there was an agreement between Gauguin and Van Gogh, to be silent about the ear incident.

Gauguin didn't realize the extent of Van Gogh's infatuation and assumed she was just another Arles prostitute. Van Gogh came to Arles after a checkered past of failed relationships, addicted to trying to fix prostitutes. Gauguin and Van Gogh had traded artist self-portraits, in September, 1888. Gauguin characterized himself as a criminal, while Van Gogh was characterized, as an enlightened Japanese Buddhist monk. Gauguin was not the best person, to introduce to your girlfriend. He was a charming sexual womanizer.

Van Gogh kept his promise, to be silent about the ear incident, but he offered a clue to what happened. It was related to the photograph of a piece of rope presented in the book Tartarin sur les Alpes by Alphonse Daudet. A case of an accident, wherein two mountain climbers tied to the same rope, both cut the rope, to save themselves. The rope in La Berceuse is an upside down letter V, for Vincent, like in his signature. The rope, is a symbol of Augustine's deceit. This was not about Van Gogh feeling inferior artistically or dejection over Gauguin's decision to leave Arles. Finally, Augustine cheated with Gauguin, then skipped town and abandoned Van Gogh. The trigger for Van Gogh to cut-off his ear was Gauguin having sex with Augustine. "He frightened me" she often confessed to her daughter. Vincent found Augustine uneasy after Roulin left for Marseilles: "I am in the middle of a portrait of Roulin's wife on which I was working before getting sick". (Letter to Theo 573, 22& 23,

January, 1889) "I painted reds going to pink going to orange, which changed to yellows, then lemon with clear, dark greens. If I could finish that, that would give me great pleasure, but I fear that she will not want to pose any more, because of her husband's absence." (T573). Roulin's daughter confessed her Mother was "afraid to be left alone with Van Gogh".



Records show Vincent cut off his ear on Xmas Eve 1888 and Van Gogh delivered it to the brothel and it was accepted by Racheal, a prostitute. Augustine was also associated with the brothel. The ear was not for Racheal, although Racheal knew Van Gogh. In the authors collection is a 17 X 22 inch version of Sunflowers with the name Racheal Glancy. Van Gogh's practice was to sign his artwork with the name of friends, to whom he gifted his paintings. The ear was an act of retribution against Augustine for sleeping with Gauguin, abandoning Vincent to join her husband in Marseilles. The clincher is after the ear incident, Van Gogh had recuperated by the end of January 1889, until Augustine Roulin's visit triggered a relapse, from which he would never recover his sanity!