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Women's World

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B-1

HER WORK: GAUGUIN

By PEGGY POWELL

THE WOMAN WHO virtually put a paint brush in Emile Gauguin's hand did so, not to find out if he could paint, but to discover the soul inside his hulking and dissipated body.

Mme. Josette Giraud, a petite dark-haired divorcee, discovered the illegitimate son of the famous artist, Paul Gauguin, living under a tree in Tahiti, sleeping on a bench and begging for a living. He weighed more than 300 pounds, he was ill, and an alcoholic.

Today he has trimmed down to 234 pounds, has given up drinking and lives with a young couple in a suburb of Chicago doing what must have been intended for him all the time, painting and sculpting.

Mme. Giraud, however, denies she "discovered" Emile.

"He was known to everyone on the island as the son of Paul Gauguin," she said in a charming and sometimes disarming blend of French and English. "He was hated by almost everyone and he lived in unbelievable poverty.

"I tell myself that inside is human. I ask myself 'Who is that man?' I take an interest in what's inside."

He first approached her with an outstretched palm and asked for 10 francs because he was hungry. Knowing of his insatiable thirst, Madame Giraud chose not to give him money. Instead she told him where she lived and invited him to dine with her.

That was the beginning of a strange friendship between a chic and brilliant woman and a gross and illiterate man.

"When I came to know him I find he was not mean, not stupid," she continued. "He is unhappy, alone. His only possession is his father's name. I ask him, 'Why you not paint?'"

And paint he did. Madame Giraud bought him brushes, oils and canvas. She taught him how to print his name. She taught him self-respect.

"From the beginning," she said, "he painted with feeling, with abili-



ty, as if he had always painted. He said on canvas what he cannot say with words."

Two years later, in 1963, Madame Giraud arranged for one-man exhibits in Paris, London and Geneva—"the three toughest cities in the world and the critics were mostly favorable."

Last February she took Emile to Chicago where she set him up in a studio and hired a young graduate student in art, Robert Lockhart, to teach him basic technique. A month later he and the Lockharts moved into a modest home in Maywood in the Chicago suburbs.

Madame Giraud and Mrs. Marjo-

rie Kovler, his current patronesses, have formed the Emile Gauguin Designs, Inc., as a commercial outlet for his work.

The vivacious Josette, in Los Angeles to interest the movie industry in a film on Emile's life, is still "mama" to the artistic giant who is old enough to be her father. But she does not object to the appellation.

"When we walk along the street," Madame Giraud said gaily, "and this big man calls me 'mama,' nobody understand—how you say—what is cooking there."

Because she took "an interest in what's inside," Mrs. Josette Giraud has found new genius in Emile Gauguin. The son of the famous artist, who once lived under a tree in Tabiti, has received critical acclaim for his own art work.

Chicago's Gauguin

By WESLEY PIPPERT

CHICAGO (UPI) — Paul Gauguin, the 19th century impressionist artist, left an illegitimate son in Tahiti who he hoped would grow up as an innocent savage, a child of nature.

That son, Emile Gauguin, now 65, is living quietly today in a Chicago suburb, turning out saleable art.

Until a few years ago, Emile was a 300-lb. lush who lived off his name and tourists who visited Tahiti. In 1959 New Yorker magazine writer Hamilton Basso wrote of Emile:

"An old, decrepit hulk of a man, bloated and gross and dirty eased himself into a chair not far from us. Barefooted, he wore a pair of torn khaki shorts, the rags of a shirt and a big straw hat. (He was) a panhandler and a renowned drunk."

In 1961 another writer wrote of tourist attraction Emile Gauguin: "For a few francs, he (the tourist) can take a picture of Emile Tai, half-caste son of painter Gauguin, a grossly fat man who will immediately spend the fee on a drink."

That year, a French woman, Mme. Josette

Giraud, persuaded Emile to become an artist like his famous father, who had turned his back on wife, family and business in France to go to Tahiti to paint. The canvases he produced there are famous throughout the world.

Mme. Giraud brought Emile to the United States.

In 1963 Mrs. Marjorie Kovler, director of a Chicago art gallery, signed him to a contract. She sent him to live with a graduate student in sculpture, Richard Lockhart, 25, and his 23-year-old wife, in Maywood, Ill.

There, the memory and image of the flowers, mountains, huts, shores and tribal gods of Tahiti pour from Gauguin's brush and chisel.

He doesn't drink any more. His weight is 187 lbs. He arises on schedule every morning at 7 and paints or sculpts until 4. His English is halting and mixed with pidgin French.

"His expression comes out in a spurt," Lockhart says. "There's no refinement because rather than go back and rework, he'll start another."

"I'm interested in him as an artist and not just because of the Tahitian romantic tale," says



UPI Telephoto

Gauguin works on a black walnut carving.

Mrs. Kovler. "He's talented. We've tried not to make him a cocktail party celebrity or a tourist attraction."

Emile's works have been shown in the Museum of Modern Art in Miami; the Art Institute of Akron, Ohio; Ohio University at Athens, Ohio; and California State College at Los Angeles, Calif.

His largest oils sell for up to \$1,200. His large wooden sculptures bring about the same price.

"We make him part of our family," Lockhart says. "He goes everywhere we do. When we have guests, he comes and perhaps sings a Tahitian song or does a dance."

"There is nobody who can't like Emile."