

ALAN WOFSY FINE ARTS LLC
1109 Geary Boulevard, San Francisco, CA 94109
Phone: 415.292.6500 Fax: 415.292.6594
e-mail beauxarts@earthlink.net

CLAUDE-EMILE SCHUFFENECKER

CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ I

JILL-ELYSE GROSSVOGEL

PUBLICATION DATE: APRIL 1, 2000. ISBN 1-55660-297-9. 296 PAGES.
FULLY ILLUSTRATED, INCLUDING SOME PLATES IN COLOR. \$175.00.

The last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century were informed by a collective exuberance that encouraged the intermingling of diverse talents. Schuffenecker was connected to this network of activity, if not always as a painter, then as a friend and colleague of other artists, critics, dealers, and collectors: Gauguin, Emile Bernard, Degas, Pissarro, Bresdin, Froment, Guillaumin, Anquetin, Dubois-Pillet, Monfreid, Seguin, Theo van Gogh, Strindberg, Fénéon, Morice, Mallarmé, Théodore Duret, de Groux, Louis Roy, Luce, Vollard, Fabre, Fayet, Octave Maus, Angrand, Rippl-Ronnai, Camille Maclair, Morisot, Sérusier, William Molard, Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, and most likely Manet, Jarry, Gide, Lautrec, Bonnard, and Rodin. The *Mercure de France* review of his retrospective at the Salon des Indépendants of 1935 provides an insight which sheds light on the nature of these relationships: "Schuffenecker died very old. He is hardly forgotten, but it is especially his old friendships with some of his most celebrated contemporaries that kept up his memory [...]. Beyond question, Schuffenecker was a good painter. What diminished his reputation is having belonged to such a famous group and having moved in the same circles, with his own brand of pleasing talent, as such great painters."

Schuffenecker spent 20 long years in the Paris public school system teaching drawing, which provided him with a steady, dependable source of income. One of the first to recognize that the threshold of the Modern was being defined by painters such as Gauguin, Seurat, Cézanne, and Van Gogh, Schuffenecker used that conviction as the basis for acquiring the new art. Volume 2 of this catalogue will present our ongoing research on the Schuffenecker collection. Still, that collection was supposed to be secondary: Claude-Emile Schuffenecker wanted to be known as an artist. He wanted his work to be taken seriously and resented having to teach.

It was seeing Seurat's work that prompted Schuffenecker's forays into divisionist painting and the production of some stunning canvases, particularly those treating the theme of sea-weed gatherers on the Normandy coast. The sunlight dancing off the

limestone cliffs and lichen-covered rocks along the beaches are accomplished pieces. During the years between 1886 - 1890 he produced the strongest of these works. Early in the new century, Schuffenecker began writing political tracts that analyzed the rapidly changing social and economic needs of France in the 20th century.

In explaining our position with regard to the current polemic over the Van Gogh forgeries attributed to Schuffenecker, we have documented the inextricable ties linking his role as an artist with his role as a collector. The source to which Dutch newspapers had referred in their obituaries of Schuffenecker first appeared in Germany, where so many of Vincent's works had gone at the turn of the century. It was a fascinating article from the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Berlin) of August 26, 1934: "The painter Schuffenecker died in Paris on the eve of his 84th year. No one in Germany would have known him had his name not been mentioned again and again in the different stories relating to false Van Goghs. Schuffenecker was a friend of Van Gogh. He belonged to the circle that had gathered around Gauguin in Pont-Aven. The friendship with Van Gogh led to a strong influence on Schuffenecker's work. In spite of that, any lay person can easily distinguish Schuffenecker's paintings from those of Van Gogh. The copies, which came onto the art market, and were based on Van Gogh's style of painting, originated presumably with his brother Amédée, a wine merchant who was also active as an art dealer. To what extent there were grounds for the brothers having been drawn into doing forgeries has never been established. It is nevertheless likely that a whole series of works painted by Amédée Schuffenecker are hanging today under the name of Van Gogh in a number of collections. The deceased Emile Schuffenecker was still exhibiting at the last Paris Salon." What caught our attention in this short death notice is the author's mistaking the activities of one brother for those of the other, as already evidenced in a 1929 article in *Das Kunstblatt*.

We firmly believe that reluctance to view Claude-Emile as the author of forgeries, copies, or composites, which were intentionally sold under Vincent's name obstructed and continues to obstruct a clear vision of the situation. Because of the pathetic portrayal of him in Gauguin's painting, because of the legend of "le bon Schuff", and because of an art that broke no new ground, Schuffenecker was both a likely and an unlikely suspect. Based on the most recent findings, Schuffenecker seems to have done no forgeries of Van Gogh's paintings prior to 1900. It is too soon to specify titles and dates of forged works post-1900 until the additional evidence emerging is carefully reviewed. Contrary to statements issued by the Direction des Musées de France and those members of the French press anxious not to close any doors to the halls of power, the Schuffenecker/Van Gogh debate is not closed. In point of fact, it has only just opened. Far from the media hype, political promotions, and protected interests, there is a slow and systematic effort on the part of scholars, working independently in four countries, to present the details of their research.