



This image depicts a painting which [Paul Gauguin](#) created in 1885. He called it *Still Life with Mandolin*, and today it is maintained by the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Gauguin created this work about three years after the stock-market crash of 1882.

Why does that matter? Because Gauguin was a stockbroker before he was a full-time artist. And ... it was the crash of 1882 which caused Gauguin to think about switching careers.

How could a person with a career in business even think that he could have a career in the art world? Because, among other things, Gauguin developed his new career by employing traits which helped him to succeed in his old career.

Take discipline, for example, as applied to a new field of study.

Gauguin had met Camille Pissarro some years before the 1882 crash. Not only did he become a patron of the artist, Gauguin became a pupil.

Learning from a master helped the budding artist-with-talent to develop his skills. Then Pissarro invited his student to display his work with well-known Impressionists.

When the crash occurred, Gauguin already had some background to help him in his new endeavor. It didn't take long for him to develop his own style, although at the start of his career he copied not-only his mentor, Pissarro, but also Paul Cézanne.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art tells us more about that phase of [Gauguin's life as an artist](#):

After the stock market crashed in 1882, Gauguin decided to become a full-time artist. He painted Impressionist landscapes, still lifes, and interiors heavily influenced not only by Pissarro but also by Paul Cézanne, whom he had met through Pissarro.

Gauguin adopted and adapted Cézanne's parallel, constructive brushstrokes; he in fact bought several paintings by Cézanne in order to study the brushwork more carefully. Nevertheless, Gauguin's pictures showed a preoccupation with dreams, mystery, and evocative symbols that revealed his own artistic inclinations.

He also sculpted, carved wood reliefs and objects, and made ceramics, signaling an interest in three-dimensional decorative objects from the beginning of his career.

It was Gauguin's preoccupation with creating what he conceived in his own mind which caused him to encourage Vincent van Gogh (who often painted what he saw in nature).

In 1888, Gauguin visited van Gogh who, at that time, was living in Arles, France. Their artistic collaboration was short-lived, however, when Vincent's emotional state caused him to cut-off part of his own left ear.

Gauguin continued to experiment with different media and different themes. The Met provides a brief [overview of his career](#):

Paul Gauguin styled himself and his art as "savage."

Although he began his artistic career with the Impressionists in Paris, during the late 1880s he fled farther and farther from urban civilization in search of an edenic paradise where he could create pure, "primitive" art. Yet his self-imposed exile to the South Seas was not so much an escape from Paris as a bid to become the new leader of the Parisian avant-garde.

Gauguin cultivated and inhabited a dual image of himself as, on the one hand, a wolfish wild man and on the other, a sensitive martyr for art. His notoriety helped to promote his astonishing work, which freed color from mimetic representation and distorted form for expressive purposes.

Gauguin pioneered the Symbolist art movement in France and set the stage for Fauvism and Expressionism.

Click on the image for a better view of *Still Life with Mandolin*.

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