



Thomas Godin

Painter and printmaker

English version



Biography

Originally from Saint-Pol-de-Léon in northern Finistère, Thomas Godin lives and works in Landerneau.

Literally imbued by the chromatic diversity of Breton landscapes, this self-taught artist has been exploring the possibilities of the printmaking technique since 2012.

An ode to Brittany, its culture and language, his work also looks to the world. From Benin to Mexico, via the Philippines and Bhutan, his many travels continually enrich his vision.

Between the reality he magnifies in print, and the iodized dream world into which he plunges the viewer, Thomas Godin's work boldly blazes a trail for universal, timeless art.

Through numerous exhibitions in France and abroad, monumental public and private commissions, auctions and documentary films evoking his atypical trajectory, Thomas Godin's work has been reaching an ever-wider audience since 2018.

Photo : © Mathieu Leguern

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An enezeg alaoouret: L'archipel doré, 2022 (détail) - Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr - Unique work - 60 x 80 cm

Breton impressions

During the first twenty-five years of his life, two visual experiences shaped Thomas Godin's aesthetic trajectory. While living with his family in the town hall of Saint-Pol-de-Léon, he assiduously frequented the colorful flamboyance of the stained glass windows in the nearby cathedral. Immersed in the semi-darkness of the 12th-century edifice, the child was captivated by the midnight blues, intense reds and sunny yellows encircled by a complex lead mesh.

He doesn't understand it, doesn't necessarily take the measure of it, but something has just been planted in his soul, a sensation, an intuition: the meeting of colors and light seduces the eye, touches the heart and makes the spirit dance. The second visual experience is the observation of the sun's mischief, splashing a thousand chromatic shades across the jagged Finistère coastline. Encouraged by the sudden changes in a mischievous climate, the star is an artist. It sculpts the rocks unveiled by the tide and masterfully paints the sea's flat surface.

So, whether in the pious atmosphere of stones that have spanned the centuries or in the invigorating, iodized spray of the open sea, the Brittany that runs through Thomas Godin's veins is a land of color and light.

But the first impressions Brittany left on him were not just visual. Over and above its heritage and landscapes, the language, learned late in life, was a powerful vehicle for the artist's imagination. The imaginative semantics and poetic construction of the lexicon are entirely consistent with Thomas Godin's relationship with the world

Travel

long term

The globe in Thomas Godin's gallery window doesn't decorate, it symbolizes. Simply and silently, materializes the artist's propensity to beat the world's paths in search of new impressions. It's no coincidence that he encountered art and the world at the same time. His awareness of its beauty and unprecedented diversity logically led him to celebrate it by making visible his intimate perception of it.

During a trip to Benin, the artist discovered the geometric patterns and colors of traditional masks. He was struck by the auratic power of their ritual use. In 2017, this influence is reflected in a series of engravings that successfully blend the heritage of West Africa with that of the Celts.

After the Balkans, the United States and Mexico, his trip to the Philippines in 2013 had a considerable impact on his work. Made up of almost 8,000 islands, the archipelago conjures up in his memory the Finistère coastline sculpted by the tides. Before his eyes, the distant braves distance to mysteriously associate with the next. Located in the south of the island of Luzon, some 50 km from the capital Manila, the Taal volcano fascinates Thomas Godin. Between the wild beauty of its slopes, the telluric power of its presence and the tragic danger of its pyroclastic eruptions, it is the perfect embodiment of the multi-faceted notion of the Sublime. The travelling artist also sees this mountain of fire as an allegory of his own creative power.



*Ouidah : de la ville éponyme, cerceau du vaudou au Bénin,
2016 Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 50 x 70 cm*

Back in France after an exhibition in Cebu City, the country's second-largest city, Thomas Godin produced a series of landscapes in which the volcano's plume of smoke seems to conquer the sky. In November 2022, the artist undertakes a month-long journey to the high valleys of Bhutan. He presents King Jigme Khesar Wangchuck and his wife with a work entitled "Béaj,, meaning "journey,, in breton...

Spaces of freedom

Pareidolia is a learned term applied to a childish simple exercise that we've probably all experienced. It involves distinguishing images from shapes, traces and stains. In this little game, the gnarled trunk of a tree, the cottony architecture of a cloud or the physiognomy of a rock can offer, for the inventive eye, so many supports for contemplation and reverie. Parallel to the forms suggested by Nature, artistic creation - relieved of the onerous task of representing the world figurative - leaves the viewer's eye free to enjoy..

Works by Landerne artist Thomas Godin provide one of the most accomplished manifestations of this. Through the intermediary

of the press roller in action, ink and paint on the engraved metal plate meet the white sheet of paper. The outcome of this fleeting encounter is always uncertain. As the first spectator, the engraver discovers his work, unique by essence.

Some artists proclaim, some declaim, others impose and profess. Thomas Godin, on the other hand, humbly suggests, proposes and invites. "While my works do evoke the atmosphere of Brittany's jagged sides, I don't want to constrain the eye to motifs, to limit it to subjects,, explains the engraver from Saint-Pol-de-Léon in Finistère.

**"I don't want to
constrain the eye
with patterns,,**



Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 180 x 160 cm

In front of each of his etchings, the viewer is invited to travel along the paths of his own inner world, his most intimate pictorial universe, his personal iconographic repertoire. So, in addition to overcoming the constraints and demands of a centuries-old technique, and generating poetic images of his inner landscapes, Thomas Godin's works offer spaces of freedom.

Interview with Thomas Godin

How did this artistic adventure begin?

The day a friend introduced me to an engraving, without really knowing how to explain it, I immediately knew that it was going to change my life, my way of looking at the world around me. At the same time as I became interested in engraving, I also discovered long-distance travel and started learning Breton, my grandmother's language. That was in 2012... Since then, as a self-taught artist, I've read books on the different techniques and I've taken incredible pleasure in plunging my hands into ink and paint.. I've never stopped!

What do your works tell us?

It's my impressions and sensations in front of a landscape that I try to translate, without always succeeding, so my works. they tell me. They tell who I am, where I come from. This visceral link to Finistère, the land where I was born, to the Breton culture of which I am a proud descendant..

Your titles are in Breton... is it an expression of this relationship?

Yes, and when I started learning Breton, I quickly realized how incredibly poetic the language is. Everything is imagery. The words themselves smell of iodine and conjure up colors. I'm convinced that whoever invented Breton must have been a painter..... I can't think of any other explanation!



Photo: © Mathieu Leguern

How do you feel about the time you spend in the workshop?

It's a blessed time. A sort of suspended parenthesis. Social time no longer applies. You're somewhere else. I work a lot at night. It's paradoxical, but that's when it's easiest for me to find the light I need to convey it in my work.

**“Engraving has
changed the way
i look at the world.,”**

Thomas Godin in 6 dates

1987: Thomas Godin born in Morlaix.
2013: Immersion in printmaking and the Breton language.
2016: Installation of his studio in Landerneau.
2017: Commissioned by Taittinger/UNESCO Reims.
2018 : First exhibition in the Philippines.
2022: Commissioning of a monumental fresco.

In the eye of... Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger

Born in Reims in 1953, Pierre Emmanuel Taittinger joined the family business in 1976 before becoming Chairman in 2007. A patron and collector, his passion for stained glass led him and Philippe Varin to buy the Simon-Macq stained glass workshops, founded in the 17th century, in 2019.

How did you meet Thomas Godin?

My first encounter with Thomas Godin's work was during a visit I made with my family to Landerneau. I was immediately drawn to the window of his gallery. I had the good sense to go through the door and discovered magnificent series of engravings emanating from the sea. There he was, at work, and we got to talking.

How would you describe your relationship?

Through our exchanges, a real relationship of friendship and trust has developed between us. A relationship based on his personality, but also on his obvious artistic talent.

Can you tell us about the order you placed?

The Champagne House I managed [Taittinger] and the Misson UNESCO I preside over commissioned a number of engravings from him. Now, when we receive a prestigious guest, we give him or her a work signed by Thomas.



Photo: © D.R.

Why did you invite Thomas Godin to visit the Simon-Marg workshops in Reims?

When I saw his work, I immediately thought he could easily adapt to this medium, which has already attracted some of the greatest names in painting... think Chagall, Matisse and so many others. What's more, Thomas Godin has retained his childlike spirit, which to me is essential in the art of stained glass. I hope we'll do some wonderful things together.

“Thomas Godin has great faith in his mission to bring happiness to those who watch his work.”

Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger

In the eye of...

Lilian Rizzon

Lilian Rizzon is in charge of the “Eco Campus La Pérolrière,, renovation project.

How did you meet Thomas Godin?

I walked past his gallery in Landerneau... I was immediately attracted by the works on display. So I went in for the first time, “on the spur of the moment,,. I told her I really like her work and would be back soon. I did, and we took the time to chat. We hit it off immediately. A chance meeting, as is often the case.

How do you view his work?

Her work is a reflection of who she is. What’s immediately obvious is his sincerity and a kind of serenity. I like the original approach that immediately identifies the work with the artist. Technique is also an important element for me: I’ve always been attracted to processes related to printing, etching... The alliance between craftsmanship, “mechanics,, (the press, the metal plates that are incised) and pure creation. I’m also amazed by the work on light and atmospheric rendering, whatever the medium. It’s a constant quest for artists, a preoccupation with translating moving elements and relating them to the feelings they evoke: it seems to me to be a central element of Thomas’s approach. And, to my mind, a great success.

What does it mean to you?

There’s a depth to his work: you’re totally immersed in what appears to be a kind of ‘faraway’. And yet, often, the inspiration lies in the landscapes of our region, Finistère. At the same time, if etymology is anything to go by, Finistère is also a far-off place. On a more serious note, it’s not the location that’s the determining factor; I think the journey you’re being suggested is an interior one. Let me put it this way: Thomas’s work absorbs you... Fun fact: try it out with his small formats...



Photo : © Lilian Rizzon

What project do you have in common?

As part of the restoration of Villa Mangini, a contemporary work of art was to be integrated into the main staircase. On either side of a stained-glass window by Lucien Begule, a 19th-century master stained-glass artist, the two panels that will house Thomas Godin’s works cover an area of almost 60m². Originally, these panels were to house paintings by Pierre Puvis-de-Chavannes, known only from preparatory drawings held in the Rhône archives. The challenge lay in the monumentality of the work, while respecting the integrity of the site and the dialogue with the existing heritage.

In addition to this work, Thomas will be creating other large-scale works inspired by the Enedis project to build a campus on the site of La Pérolrière site. They will be installed in the new building, which will serve as a reception point for trainees, restaurants and offices. We wanted to make a strong architectural statement with this building like the Villa, a showcase for Enedis. Hanging of Thomas’s works will give a decorative coherence between existing between existing and future heritage.

The film

Light on the horizon

The fruit of the complicity between a filmmaker and an artist, *La Lumière pour horizon* immerses the viewer in engraver Thomas Godin's intimate relationship with Brittany, the beauty of its territory, and the richness of its language and culture.

From the poetry of the Roscovite coastline sculpted by the tide, to the colors of the stained glass windows in the cathedrals of Reims and Saint-Pol-de-Léon, via the artist's Landerne studio, this 45-minute film is an invitation to travel. A topographical as much as an aesthetic journey to discover a demanding creative process and a polysemous Work.

During the summer of 2021, filmmaker Romain Arazm's camera discreetly accompanies the artist to the places in the Finistère region that have profoundly influenced his imagination and become the material for his work. Riding a motorcycle from the 50s, Thomas Godin returns to the village of Saint-Pol-de-Léon, where he spent the first years of his life.

Two visual shocks seem to have been at the origin of his approach: the infinite shades of blue of a coastline that the engraver knows to the tips of his eyes, and the intense chromaticism of the stained-glass windows of the cathedral, epicenter of the Léon bishopric. *"There's something very Proustian about coming back here,,,"* confides the artist.

Click on the QR code to
access the film's private link:



Photos: © MAZART Production

"There is something very Proustian coming back to Saint-Pol-de-Léon, to the land of my childhood.,,"

—
Thomas Godin

In 2017, he met Champagne patron Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger, who invited him to visit the Simon-Marq stained glass workshops in Reims. A true immersion in the know-how of master glassmakers, this sequence also highlights the often passionate relationship between an artist and a collector. An eulogy to slowness, this audiovisual stroll takes the time to let the artist's words and thoughts unfold, with neither theatrical nor theatrical effects.



The texte

From copper to light

by Romain Arazm

In the nocturnal intimacy of his studio, Thomas Godin, like an alchemist, transforms copper into light, transforming the surface of his etched plates into a space as vast as it is deep. The sky and sea seem to take pleasure in coming together. As a self-taught artist, he follows nature's teachings to the letter. Because he knows how to listen, the wind blows ideas at him. Because he knows how to see them, the clouds, in passing, lavish him with wise advice.

Because he's from Brittany, Thomas Godin has traveled the world's roads with his wandering feet. This simultaneity of rootedness and travel nourishes his relationship with the world and contributes greatly to the richness of his art. Equidistant between the artist's mind and the craftsman's body, his approach is entirely in search of both formal and spiritual unity. Although contemplating his engravings requires no special knowledge, they are nonetheless a gateway to a grandiose world where linguistics meets cartography and ethnology meets sociology.

In short, Thomas Godin's work is an effective link between art and life. According to a very Asian approach to existence, the "consciousness of,, which the artist has established as an authentic way of life, enables him to maintain fruitful dialogues with materials, with colors and with the forms that sometimes arise by chance from their combinations. The engraver remains confident. He knows he's doing things right.

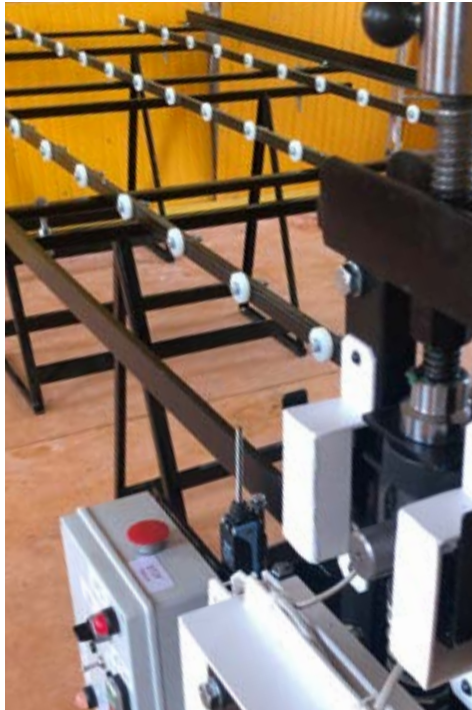


Ar vuhez danvorell: Underwater life, 2021 (detail)
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 100 x 70 cm

“Thomas Godin’s engravings are bridges between worlds that the intelligence of his hand has succeeded in bringing together in a secret unity.”

Traces are stains, stains are shapes. Under the implacable mechanism of his press, these forms gain their autonomy, and the eruptive silhouette of an Indonesian volcano can become the sublime flaking of a ship's hull, or the escarpment of a coastline at low tide. The viewer's interpretation completes a work in which several subjectivities merge.

Between night and day, here and elsewhere, reality and fantasy, heart and mind, Thomas Godin's engravings are bridges between worlds that the intelligence of his hand has succeeded in bringing together in a secret unity.



The largest press in the world

Produced using a technically demanding process involving a metal plate (copper, zinc, aluminium, etc.) and a press, engravings since the Renaissance have generally been limited in size. They spread across the pages of luxury books and enabled paintings to be reproduced, and therefore distributed on a large scale. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, many artists were inspired by works they had only seen in print. Essential to the art economy, engravings also had a considerable impact on the evolution of tastes and the circulation of styles.

Encouraged by the vast landscapes that inspired him and in which he took pleasure in immersing the viewer, Thomas Godin, from the outset, thought big. Very big.

By designing the plans himself for the world's largest press, to be installed in his Landerneau studio in 2022, he has ensured that he will be able to produce works measuring up to ten metres in length, all in one piece. A size that is, if not unheard of, at least extremely rare in the thousand-year history of this technique. From the handling of the plates, which can weigh up to 30 kg, to the vats of acid in which he has to immerse them for several hours, to the tools he uses to distribute his varnishes as evenly as possible, right through to the drying areas, it is the entire artistic process that Thomas Godin has had to adapt to the extravagant dimensions of his works.

Lumen: a Promethean ode with Chagallian overtones

Commissioned in 2022 by ENEDIS to adorn the main staircase of the Villa Mangini in Saint-Pierre-la-Palud (69), the monumental work **Lumen**, arranged in a dyptic and composed of eighteen marouflaged engravings measuring 200 x 130 cm each, appears to be the largest polychrome engraving ever produced.

The artist had to deal with architectural constraints in order to create his work. His approach to pictorial space, which is generally structured around a horizon line that is sometimes barely visible, has adapted to the verticality of the support, abandoning atmospheric perspective in favour of a bird's-eye view of a territory over which he has flown.

The pictorial material becomes motifs, creating an imaginary cartography that blurs the eminently porous boundary between the figurative and the abstract. Although the clash of deep blues and fragmented yellows in the background may recall the jagged coastline of Brittany, with **Lumen** Thomas Godin touches on the universal. Let's talk more about a jubilant impulse towards ethereal heights, a dreamlike poetry not unlike that of Marc Chagall, a Promethean ode to knowledge and technical progress, of which electricity is a resolute part. As well as taking advantage of the verticality imposed to create a work of ascent that conveys not religious but spiritual hope, the artist manages - like the old masters - to metaphorically evoke the identity of his client, ENEDIS, the owner of the Villa Mangini.

The fruit of the aesthetic complicity between the Lyon architect Gaspar André (1840-1896) and the Italian-born industrialist Felix Mangini (1836-1902), the villa covers some 2,700 m² and appears to be a temple dedicated to the arts. Thomas Godin's work is in good company on the main staircase, the pivotal point in the villa's layout.



Photo: © D.R.

“Homogeneity was one of my priorities. Above all, I didn’t want to achieve a patchwork effect, but rather an aesthetic unity throughout the composition.”

—
Thomas Godin

It is lit from the side by natural light from a stained-glass window by master stained-glass artist Lucien Bégule (1848-1935) and frames a chandelier, also monumental, commissioned from designer Thierry Vidé.

Since the restoration of the building was completed and **Lumen** was installed to coincide with the Heritage Days in September 2023, Villa Mangini has been a fertile breeding ground for exchanges between the heritage of the past and contemporary creation. An authentic synthesis of the plastic and technical research that Thomas Godin has been carrying out for the last ten years, **Lumen** has resolutely found a setting in this place that matches its poetic power.



Monumental sculpture

Thanks to a public commission from Landerneau in Finistère, Thomas Godin has had the opportunity to translate the monumentality of his plastic research into sculptures. Positioned on either side of the River Elorn, which not only flows through the town but also forms the border between Léon in the north and Cornouaille in the south, these two monumental works express the artist's close relationship with the Breton region and its language.

Continuing the series that has graced the walls of his gallery since 2015, 'Dor al Loar' (the Moon Gate) was installed in the summer of 2023. An explicit allusion to the heraldic history of the town of Landerneau, which had to change its emblem by decision of the Sun King, the composition of this sculpture offers a singular view of the Pont de Rohan, one of the few inhabited bridges in Europe. Set in a Corten metal frame, this urban landscape becomes a work of art to be admired, an image with meaning.

On the other side of the Elorn, the six metres or so of 'Herezh' (Inheritance) reflect the importance that the Breton language, which Thomas Godin taught for several years, has had in shaping his artistic career.

Partly patronised by Oxyman, the company responsible for their manufacture, these two works reflect the environment in which they have been installed, thanks to their shimmering mirror-polished stainless steel surface.

From engraving to sculpture and, in the future, stained glass, Thomas Godin is a curious explorer of artistic techniques and processes, all ways of expressing the porosity of the here and the elsewhere, the real and the imaginary.

Photo: © D.R.

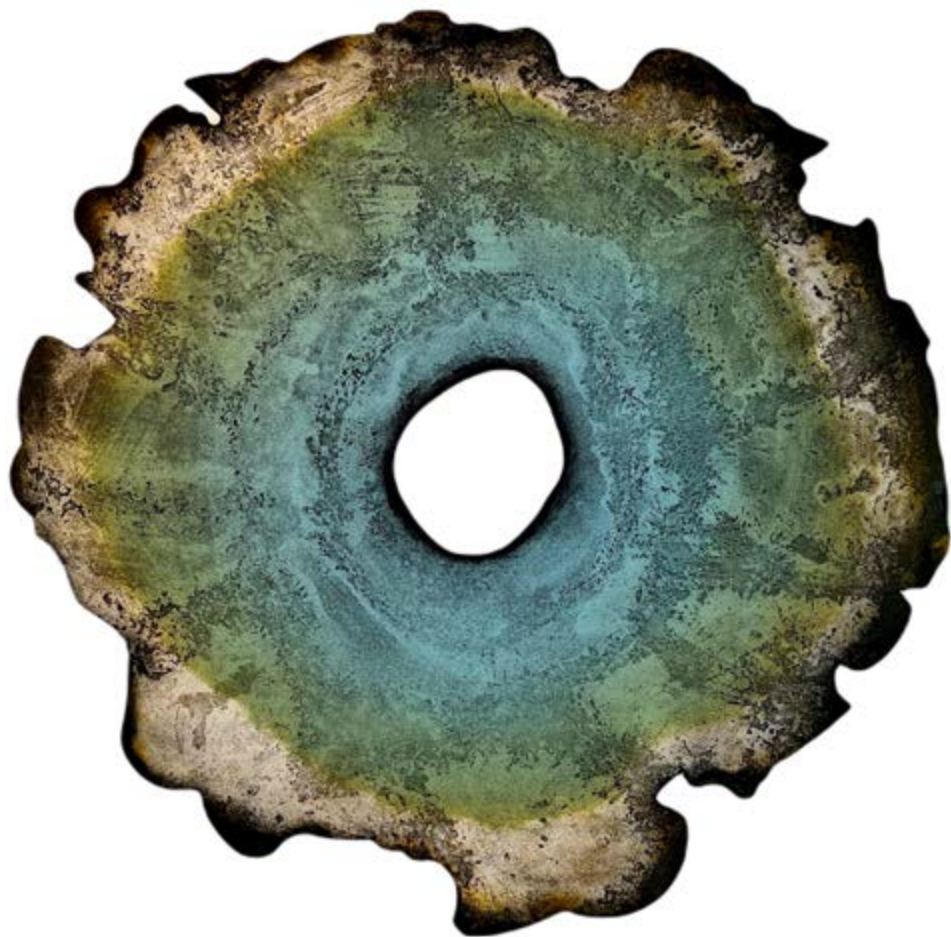


Highlights

Photo: © Sylvain B.



An noz alaouret: The golden night, 2021
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 120 x 80 cm



Bleunienn an aov-vev: Foreshore flower, 2022
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 125 x 140 cm



Dor al loar ruz tan: The Door of the Red Fire Moon, 2019
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 60 x 60 cm



Archipelago 1, 2024
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 200x135 cm



Archipelago 2, 2024
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 200x135 cm



Archipelago 3, 2024
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 200x135 cm



Archipelago 4, 2024
Etching on zinc - Polychrome print on Arches vellum 350gr
One-of-a-kind piece - 200x135 cm

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