

The background of the cover is a detailed 19th-century painting of a storm at sea. The sky is filled with heavy, dark, and turbulent clouds, with some light breaking through near the horizon. The sea is dark and choppy, with white-capped waves crashing against a sandy beach in the foreground. Several large sailing ships with multiple masts and sails are visible on the horizon, some appearing to be struggling against the wind. The overall mood is one of intense natural power and maritime drama.

**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME ONE

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,
Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley,
Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
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225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267
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Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications
and Information Resources
Dan Cohen, Special Projects Editor
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Michael Agee, Photographer
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Designed by Susan Marsh
Composed in Meta by Matt Mayerchak
Copyedited by Sharon Herson
Bibliography edited by Sophia Wagner-Serrano
Index by Kathleen M. Friello
Proofread by June Cuffner
Production by The Production Department,
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Details:

TITLE PAGE: John Constable, *Yarmouth Jetty* (cat. 73)

OPPOSITE COPYRIGHT PAGE: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Bathers of the Borromean Isles* (cat. 89)

PAGE VIII: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Woman Crocheting* (cat. 267)

PAGE X: Claude Monet, *Seascape, Storm* (cat. 222)

PAGE XII: Jacques-Louis David, *Comte Henri-Amédée-Mercure de Turenne-d'Aynac* (cat. 103)

PAGE XVI: William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Nymphs and Satyr* (cat. 33)

PRECEDING PAGE 2: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Snake Charmer* (cat. 154)

cleaned by De Wild of New York, possibly around 1945. De Wild re-inpainted the cow that Corot had intentionally covered, which can be detected today fairly easily in the right foreground, along with a small girl in a pink dress standing in front of it. It is not clear whether they were ever part of this image or belonged to an earlier composition. Just beneath the cow is a curved 12.7-cm track left where a human hair was extracted from the dry paint. When the picture was again cleaned in 1978, old solvent abrasion was noted in the darks of the women's costumes and feet, along with other small locations. A large rectangle of new inpainting now hides the cow and the girl.

The ground layers are a warm off-white color and appear to have been applied by the artist. The canvas weave is visible in the sky, with some stretching distortions along the left edge. The ground layer has short diagonal cracks along the threads. No underdrawing was detected with infrared viewing, although the overpainted cow and figure are more discernible. A number of alterations appear to have occurred at the time the cow was removed, including the addition of flowers and foliage in the right foreground. A 7.6-cm band of the sun-streak in the lower left road was placed in shadow with a gray wash. The large and mid-sized figures were painted over thin gray painted reserves. The landscape is made up of layers of thin wispy strokes, glazes, scumbles, and thick highlight details: some of the latter were painted after lower paint layers had set.

1. Strahan 1883–84, vol. 3, p. 21.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. See Paris–Ottawa–New York 1996–97, entries in index under Ville-d'Avray for information on the site, and nos. 4, 32, 102, 147–49 for other depictions of the site.
5. Ville-d'Avray 1987, no. 31.
6. R 1463–71 and 1474–1506.
7. Henriët 1891, p. 101: “C'est affaire de discernement.”
8. Nancy Davenport, “Henriët, Frédéric,” in Grove Art Online (accessed 7 Aug. 2007).
9. George Washington Vanderbilt placed this and a number of other works on long-term loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1886. The works were returned to his nephew in 1919.

91 | **Washerwomen in a Willow Grove** 1871

Oil on canvas, 38.1 x 46.2 cm

Lower left: COROT

1955-526

When Alfred Robaut published this painting in his catalogue raisonné of Corot's oeuvre in 1905, he dated it to May–June 1871 and localized it to Sainte-Catherine-lez-Arras, a hamlet northwest of the town of Arras on the other side of the River Scarpe. Corot had remained in Paris throughout the Franco-Prussian War and the siege of 1870–71. After the siege was lifted, Robaut made his way to Paris in mid-March and convinced Corot to visit his friends in the north. Corot needed little encouragement and by early April was in Arras, in the Pas-de-Calais.

Arras and its environs were well known to Corot by this time, as he had visited there almost annually for twenty years. In Arras, Corot found a group of friends who not only welcomed him into their families but also, being artists themselves, accompanied him on painting expeditions.

Corot's increasingly close connection to Arras began in 1847, when Constant Dutilleux, a painter and lithographer (1807–1865), wrote to Corot asking to buy a painting. Corot went to Arras to meet Dutilleux in 1851, the first of his many trips. The next year in Arras, Corot met Robaut (1830–1909), the man whose catalogue raisonné of Corot's work remains the foundation for all studies of the artist, and in 1853 Robaut married one of Dutilleux's daughters. Five years later, another of Dutilleux's daughters married Charles-Paul Desavary (1837–1885). Desavary, in addition to being a landscapist and lithographer, was a photographer. In 1872, when Robaut was beginning to compile the information for his catalogue, he had six hundred of Corot's paintings shipped from Paris to Arras so that Desavary could photograph them (including this one). Over the years Corot painted close to fifty pictures in Arras and its surroundings.¹ It was in Arras, too, that Corot was persuaded in 1853 to try his hand at the photographic printmaking process of cliché-verre; in 1871, he made twelve transfer lithographs. For Corot, then, Arras was a place filled with genial friends and motifs from which to make art.

The terrain around Arras is flat and was, in Corot's time, marshy, not unlike the countryside of Belgium. The area had been part of France only since 1667,



91

when Louis XIV won it during the War of Devolution. The architecture of Arras, including the church tower in the right-hand background of *Washerwomen in a Willow Grove*, looks more Flemish than French. This part of the Pas-de-Calais in general, though, “has the reputation of not being very suitable for painters,” or so wrote Corot in a letter of 1853. It nonetheless piqued his interest, for he continued: “I think I can do some interesting work there, if the Lord guides my brush.” In a rare instance of articulating his approach to painting, he wrote, “I also think that it isn’t so much the site as the interpretation that makes the work.”² Corot’s presence in the area in May 1853 (he was a witness to Robaut’s wedding) was reported in the local press: “M. Corot, the famous landscapist, is at this moment in Arras, where he is making, in the company of his friend M. Dutilleux, some studies of our area. Thanks to him, our countryside, for so long disdained, will become famous.”³

When this picture was included in the Exposition Universelle of 1889, it was called simply *Paysage d’Artois*; the pointed and reticulated church tower was not recognized as belonging to the church of Saint-Nicolas-les-Arras, a hamlet just across the River Scarpe from the town of Arras.⁴ The church appears in one of the transfer lithographs Corot made in 1871 and in his painting *Près d’Arras* (Musée du Louvre, Paris, on deposit at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Arras), as here, in the distance.⁵ It is in fact impossible to get a sense of the topography of Saint-Nicolas-les-Arras from Corot’s depictions for the simple reason that he was not interested in delineating the specifics of a site.⁶ As noted above, twenty years before he painted this view, Corot admitted that his interpretation of a site trumped the actuality. The church tower functions as a locator, helping to make this stretch of countryside, “so long disdained,” “famous.”

If Corot’s interpretation of the site takes prece-

dence over the topography, we may be given license to disregard to some degree the figures he includes in his pictures. The women spreading lengths of fabric under the pollarded willows just coming into leaf locate the picture neither in Artois nor in the nineteenth century. They are the artist's shorthand for rural France, which by this date, after the end of the Second Empire, was a construct of urban nostalgia. Corot, painting for a city-based market, may have included such figures to promulgate a sense of pride in one's country, its traditions, and its folkways. Certainly, the manner in which the picture was painted, in thin washes and scumbles of delicate green overlying an almost geometric structure of horizontals and verticals, belies any sense of reportage or even actuality. Corot spent many months in Arras over the years, but this is not a portrait of the place. It may instead be the physical manifestation of Corot's feelings about the Artois, its vernal softness corresponding to the sense of welcome and renewal he felt whenever he went there. FEW

PROVENANCE Bollet; Émile Dehau (until 1885, his sale, Drouot, Paris, 21 Mar. 1885, no. 12, as *Les prairies de Sainte-Catherine, à Arras*); Tabourier (in 1889); Henri Heugel (possibly by 1895–1905, his sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 26 May 1905, no. 3, ill., as *Paysage d'Artois*, sold to Boussod, Valadon);⁷ [Boussod, Valadon, Paris, from 1905]; Count Cecil Charles Pecci-Blunt, Paris, on consignment to Seligmann (in Nov. 1940); [Jacques Seligmann, New York, sold to Clark, 2 Jan. 1941, as *Paysage d'Artois*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1941–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Paris 1889b, p. 46, no. 182, as *Paysage d'Artois*; Williamstown 1956a, no. 88, pl. 5; Williamstown 1959b, ill.

REFERENCES Fourcaud 1889, vol. 1, p. 364, ill., as *Paysage d'Artois* (print after the painting); Dayot 1890, p. 100;⁸ Robaut 1905, vol. 3, pp. 250–51, no. 2011, ill.; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 19, ill.; Fleming 1968, pp. 472–73, fig. 533; Morse 1979, p. 64; Horbez 2004, pp. 104, 187, as *Les Blanchisseuses dans la saulaie, Sainte-Catherine-lez-Arras*; Mowry 2005, p. 15, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine twill-weave linen, with an old paste lining onto gauze and linen fabrics, now stained on the reverse. The five-member stretcher may be original. William Suhr of New York treated several flaking areas and probably cleaned the picture in 1961. There are dislodged pieces of paint scattered and attached to the surface by the old lining, indicating that the picture was subject to early flaking damage. There is an original scratch in the wet paint through the green and brown in the lower right, as well

as small wood fiber deposits in the surface. During a 1981 examination and treatment, abrasion was noted where thin paint passes over the thick sky application. Early reinforcements of the sensitive dark colors were also recorded. This last cleaning removed a synthetic resin varnish together with some natural resin residues. There are long, wandering paint cracks, and a stretcher crease along the inside edge of the top stretcher bar. Retouchings have been done in the upper right sky and unfilled retouchings along the lower edge. The inpainting is slightly matte in reflected light, and the canvas weave is visible along with several flattened impastos.

The ground layer is a commercially primed off-white, with a possible underwash or sketch in gray, which shows through where the final colors skip over the canvas weave. Infrared reflectography shows tree trunks in the lower left foreground, painted out by the artist, and shapes below the paint near the top edge, one of which is visible to the unaided eye. For the most part, the paint is handled wet-into-wet. The two women at the left were painted over the green foreground colors. White brush bristles are scattered in the paint, and two human hairs are embedded in the surface.

1. Horbez 2004, pp. 187–88. For Corot's ties to Arras, see Horbez 2004 in general and Chronology in Paris–Ottawa–New York 1996–97, pp. 413–18.
2. Camille Corot to Mlle Clerc de Landresse, at Rosny, 16 Apr. 1853, published by Paul Bonnefon, *Bulletin de l'art ancien et moderne*, 3rd year, no. 117 (7 Dec. 1901), p. 276, reprinted in Robaut 1905, vol. 4, p. 334, no. 46; translation from Paris–Ottawa–New York 1996–97, pp. 225–26.
3. *Le Progrès*, 20 May 1853, quoted in Horbez 2004, p. 16: “M. Corot, le célèbre paysagiste, est en ce moment à Arras, où il fait en compagnie de son ami, M. Dutilleux, quelques études de nos environs. Grâce à lui, notre pays si longtemps dédaigné deviendra illustre.”
4. Destroyed in World War I, the church was rebuilt in the same style. See <http://home.nordnet.fr/rlagache/achicourt2/situation/saintnicolas.htm> (accessed 20 Mar. 2007).
5. The lithograph is R 3142; *Près d'Arras* is R 2039.
6. Views by Desavary and Jules Thépaut may depict the church in its context more accurately; see Horbez 2004, pp. 103, 106.
7. The Clark copy of sale catalogue is annotated “Boussod c/ Bernheim jeune.”
8. Dayot 1890, p. 100, states that the work was lent to Paris 1889b by Tabourier.