



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

**VOLUME TWO**

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,  
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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,  
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Details:

TITLE PAGE: Camille Pissarro, *The Louvre from the Pont Neuf* (cat. 253)

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PAGES 890–91: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphis* (cat. 3)

1. Baragnon 1902, p. 98: "Si je n'étais peintre, je voudrais être médecin."
2. Joyant 1926, p. 132: "vaticinait, avec un accent de paysan beauceron, pour amuser la galerie et emplir la salle de bruit, pérorant sur choses n'ayant aucun rapport avec l'audacieux travail qu'il accomplissait dans un ventre ouvert, au milieu d'un soleil de pincés." Joyant was a former schoolmate and longtime supporter of Lautrec, and wrote the first full account of the artist's career.
3. Tapié de Céleyran 1922, p. 355; translation from London–Paris 1991–92, p. 156.
4. Dortu 1971 lists at least 46 sketches, D D3.154–185b, D3.187–191, D3.195a–b, D3.197, D3.198, and S.D.17–19.
5. Baragnon 1902, p. 100; Joyant 1926, p. 271.
6. See Murray 1991, p. 254; and the letter from Lautrec to his mother, dated [Sept. 1891], in which he notes, "as for my uncle and Gabriel, they've gone back to Rivaude until the 5th, at which time the courses are to begin. Gabriel will live in a hotel, in the Latin Quarter" (Schimmel 1991, p. 152, letter 205).
7. See Emery and Emery 2006, p. 88, as well as numerous letters in the Clark's curatorial file. Anne Roquebert suggests that the gray oval shape just under the patient's jaw is a hole that might support the reading of a tracheotomy to open the windpipe, but even this shape is difficult to read with certainty. See London–Paris 1991–92, p. 158.
8. This practice is described in the biography at [www.medarus.org/Medecins/MedecinsTextes/pean.html](http://www.medarus.org/Medecins/MedecinsTextes/pean.html) (accessed 6 Dec. 2011).
9. D P385.
10. *Head of a Woman* (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.1430).
11. RSC Diary, 9 Mar. 1934.
12. RSC Diary, 23 May 1940. Although Clark regularly made similar comments to dealers, presumably as a simple way of declining a purchase, it seems significant that he mentioned this work, particularly as this was just a few months after he had bought Lautrec's *Jane Avril* (cat. 331), a somewhat more finished and more characteristic work.

**331 | Jane Avril** c. 1891–92

Oil on laminate cardboard, mounted on panel, 63.2 x 42.2 cm  
 Upper left: HTL [monogram]  
 1955.566

This is one of a number of Toulouse-Lautrec's portraits of Jane Avril (1868–1943), a dancer who made her name at the Moulin Rouge dance hall and *café-concert*. By 1891–92, when this work was painted, Lautrec had become a regular visitor to several of the nightspots in his Montmartre neighborhood. Having earlier posed models such as Carmen Gaudin and Suzanne Valadon as representatives of the clientele in such establishments (see *Waiting* [cat. 329]), and then collaborated with proprietors such as Aristide Bruant to decorate and promote their venues, Lautrec went on to depict some of the most prominent performers. Among these, he had perhaps the most sustained friendship with Jane Avril, whom he probably met about 1890.

Avril was born Jeanne Louise Beaudon, the illegitimate daughter of a French mother, Léontine Clarisse Beaudon, known as Élise, and an Italian father, Luigi Defant, who styled himself the "marquis de Font."<sup>1</sup> De Font abandoned the family when Jeanne was about two, and after suffering from poverty and abuse, Jeanne left home in her teens. At about this time, she was diagnosed with a neurological disorder, chorea, that causes involuntary muscle movements, and sought treatment in 1882 from the well-known neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in Paris. According to her memoirs, at a certain point during her two-year stay at the hospital, she attended a ball and there discovered that dancing effectively cured her symptoms.<sup>2</sup> After leaving the hospital in 1884, she visited a public dance-hall the following year and, she wrote, "from that wonderful evening dates my vocation as a dancer, my only raison d'être from then on."<sup>3</sup> A few years later she was engaged by the Moulin Rouge, which opened in 1889, as both a quadrille dancer and a solo performer. Lautrec may have first represented her as a small secondary figure in a painting of 1891–92, *La Goulue: Resting Between Two Sets of the Waltz* (location unknown),<sup>4</sup> a work that centers on another Moulin Rouge star, La Goulue ("the Glutton," the stage name of Louise Weber). Although the figure in the right



background of this picture faces almost entirely away from the viewer, her long, thin legs and the angular, awkward movement they describe suggest the slender figure and frenzied dance style for which Jane Avril was known. This highly energetic style earned her the nickname “La Mélinite,” melinite being a form of explosive related to dynamite.

Avril quickly took on greater prominence in Lautrec’s depictions. Between 1892 and 1899, he made a series of paintings and posters that featured Avril both as a performer and as a private individual, a range of roles the artist rarely granted to any of the other celebrities he depicted. The present portrait, in fact, gives no explicit indication of her profession. It shows her at about half length against an abstract background, wrapped to the chin in a purplish coat with indigo trimming, and wearing a large plumed hat that appears in several other portraits.<sup>5</sup> Her expression is closed, with slightly pursed lips, and as in virtually all of Lautrec’s other depictions of her, she looks not outward at the viewer but off to the side. This guardedness appears consistently in each of Lautrec’s portraits of Avril; even in a work like *Jane Avril Dancing* (c. 1892; Musée d’Orsay, Paris),<sup>6</sup> she appears entirely self-possessed and unsmiling, although she is in the process of hiking her skirt above her knees and splaying her legs almost at right angles.

Lautrec’s characterization contrasts distinctly with his usual presentation of Avril’s fellow performer La Goulue, who, in a work like *La Goulue at the Moulin Rouge* (c. 1891–92; Museum of Modern Art, New York),<sup>7</sup> appears both physically and psychologically exposed, her deeply cut neckline revealing much of her body, and her self-important expression exaggerated so that she seems slightly ridiculous. In fact, Lautrec’s depictions of Avril are also somewhat at odds with several photographs of her, which show her in a standard décolletage, smiling invitingly and looking directly at the viewer.<sup>8</sup> This discrepancy perhaps indicates Lautrec’s respect for Avril, who was by most accounts well-read and who maintained friendships with numerous artists and writers. The first owner of this portrait, Frantz Jourdain, may have been part of this circle; he was a writer, critic, and architect, and President of the Salon d’Automne from 1903. His son Francis Jourdain, the next owner, was certainly among Lautrec’s friends, having written an article on “The Modern Poster and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec” in 1893 and sat for a drypoint portrait by the artist in 1898.<sup>9</sup>

In this portrait, the artist employed the technique of

*peinture à l’essence*, using oil paint from which much of the oil had been removed and replaced with turpentine, allowing him to brush pigment thinly and rapidly over most areas of the cardboard support without any preparatory underdrawing while leaving considerable portions unpainted. The finished work therefore has a matte appearance and a linear, fluently brushed quality that resembles the spontaneity of a drawing. Its heightened, complex colors are characteristic of Lautrec’s mature work; here their unnatural quality, ranging from the sitter’s stark white face, bright red lips, and orange hair, to the background strokes of green, indigo, and other colors that serve only to energize the image rather than to represent anything, are suggestive of the heavy stage makeup and dramatic lighting in which Avril so often appeared. All these elements make *Jane Avril* one of the most stylistically advanced paintings that Sterling Clark ever purchased. He was, in fact, initially hesitant about the work when he was first shown it in April 1939.<sup>10</sup> On seeing it again in January 1940, he determined that it was too expensive, but a week later, he brought Francine to the gallery and, as Sterling commented in his diary, he “never saw Francine more enthusiastic over a picture!!!!”<sup>11</sup> Perhaps part of her enthusiasm stemmed from the background she shared with Avril, who had given up dancing and become a stage actress from 1901 to 1905, just the period when Francine herself had been an actress.<sup>12</sup> Francine’s opinion was clearly decisive in this case, for just a few days later the Clarks purchased the painting, even paying the full asking price. SL

**PROVENANCE** Frantz Jourdain, Paris (by 1898–d. 1935); Francis Jourdain, his son, Paris, by descent (1935–until at least 1936); [Wildenstein, New York, by 1939, sold to Clark, 10 Feb. 1940]; Robert Sterling Clark (1940–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** London 1898a, no. 11, as *Jane Avril Full face*, lent by Jourdain; possibly London 1898b, no. 81;<sup>13</sup> Paris 1902b, no. 90, as *Mélinite*, lent by Jourdain; Paris 1914b, no. 102, lent by Jourdain; Paris 1936a, no. 148, ill., as *Jeanne Avril*, lent by Jourdain; Paris 1937a;<sup>14</sup> New York 1946b, no. 18, ill., as *Jane Avril, “La Melinite”*; New York 1951, no. 61, ill.; Williamstown 1956a, no. 128, pl. 45; Williamstown 1960a, no. 1, pl. 45; New York 1967, no. 52; Williamstown 1972, no cat.; Williamstown 1980a, no cat.; Williamstown 1985a, no cat.; Williamstown 1988c, no cat.; Williamstown 1991b, no cat.; Williamstown 1992b, no cat.; Washington–Chicago 2005, pp. 139, 257, fig. 173; Williamstown–New York 2006–7, pp. 81–83, fig. 75; Williamstown 2009, no cat.; London 2011a, pp. 20, 22, 64, 84, cat. 2, ill., and ill. on cover.

**REFERENCES** Coquirot 1921b, p. 56; Astre 1926, p. 101; Joyant 1926, p. 274, ill. opp. p. 90; Joyant 1927a, p. 162, ill.; Lapparent 1927, p. 35; Huyghe 1931a, p. 155, fig. 40; Schaub-Koch 1935, p. 208; *Beaux-Arts* 1936, p. 1, ill.; Roger-Marx 1936, p. 103, ill.; Lassaingne 1939, p. 96, ill.; Dortu 1952 p. 6, ill.; Frankfurter 1956, pp. 43, 68, ill.; *Sele Arte* 1956, p. 57, ill.; *Art News* 1960a, p. 33; Hanley 1961, p. 36, ill.; Adhémar et al. 1962, p. 128; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 146, ill.; Ashbery 1967, p. 47; Aymar 1967, pp. 136, 140, pl. 67; Sugana 1969, p. 107, no. 321, ill. (English ed., p. 107, no. 321, ill.; French ed., p. 114, no. 429, ill.); Dortu 1971, vol. 2, pp. 248–49, no. P418, ill.; Baxter 1979, pp. 41–44, fig. 2; Klein 1979, p. 144, fig. 2; Brooks 1981, pp. 74–75, no. 33, ill.; Dortu and Méric 1981, vol. 2, p. 20, no. 359, ill.; London–Paris 1991–92, p. 294, fig. b; Kern et al. 1996, pp. 124–25, ill.; Williamstown 1996–97, pp. 11–12, fig. 5; Brooke 1997, p. 503, pl. v; Jimenez 2001, p. 54; Cahill 2005, p. 40, ill.; Madrid 2010–11, pp. 28–29, fig. 13.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is yellow-gray pressed cardboard, 0.5 cm thick, with a slight convex warp and an irregular surface texture. At some point this brittle, acidic board was mounted onto a cradled mahogany panel. There are various gouges and scratches in the support along the top and bottom edges, and in the lower left corner. There is a stable blister in the cardboard surface in the lower left side of the cloak. The number of interlayer delaminations in the structure of the support is typical of this type of cardboard and probably existed prior to the painting's execution. There is a large 1.3-cm plate of lifted cracked paint along the bridge of the sitter's nose. Losses and loose pigment are visible in the thick green brushwork of the hat. The picture is unvarnished. Examination in ultraviolet light revealed possible foxing in the support in the lower center of the cloak.

There is no ground layer, and no underdrawing is evident. There may be a preliminary blue paint sketch, which is slightly detectable below the jawline. The paint was applied in long wash-like strokes, with some impastos, some with a slight sheen in the thick strokes. The painting probably uses the technique of *peinture à l'essence*, in which the paint is thinned with turpentine. Excess oil was probably also removed in order to enhance the matte quality, but the lack of binding medium has affected the paint's cohesiveness and its bond to the support where the application was thickest.

1. Brécourt-Villars and Morel 2005, p. 105n1. The editors note, however, that they could not verify the biographical information on her parents. Avril's memoirs were first published in serial form in *Paris-Midi*, 7–26 Aug. 1933.
2. Brécourt-Villars and Morel 2005, p. 30. For more on this event and the annual ball at the Salpêtrière, known as the “madwomen's ball” (“bal des folles”), see London 2011a, pp. 43–57.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 37: “De ce fameux soir date ma vocation de danseuse, ma seule raison d'être désormais.”

4. D P399.
5. In London 2011a, p. 64, the coat is identified as a “Garrick,” an English men's style with a large collar and attached cape, although Avril must have personalized the color and cut of the version she wears. She appears in the same outfit in an 1893 print Lautrec made for the cover of one of a series of print albums, *L'Estampe originale*, as well as in two preparatory drawings for the print. See Wittrock 1985, vol. 1, pp. 56–57, no. 3, for the print; and D P486 and A205 for the studies.
6. D P416.
7. D P423.
8. Two such photographs are reproduced in London–Paris 1991–92, pp. 290, 296, fig. b. Another group of photographs is reproduced in London 2011a, pp. 109–11; while several of these show Avril smiling, she has a more neutral expression in many others, and generally appears in high-collared clothing.
9. The article, “L'affiche moderne et Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec,” *La Plume* (15 Nov. 1893), pp. 488–93, is actually ascribed to Frantz Jourdain, but in his 1952 book *T-Lautrec*, Francis Jourdain states that he was the author of the article. See Jourdain and Adhémar 1952, p. 134. The print portrait of Francis Jourdain is listed in Wittrock 1985, vol. 2, pp. 560–61, no. 243.
10. Wildenstein first showed it to him almost as a challenge, after Clark had jokingly suggested that they didn't dare to show him “bad” pictures. That the dealer then chose to bring out *Jane Avril* suggests that he thought its powerful colors and rapid facture would not be to Clark's more conservative taste. See RSC Diary, 17 Apr. 1939.
11. RSC Diary, 3 Feb. 1940.
12. Francine Clary first appeared on stage in 1897, and performed regularly in Paris and the provinces from 1900 to 1904. She was then engaged by the Comédie Française from 1904 until 1910. See Williamstown–New York 2006–7, pp. 35–36.
13. Two works depicting Jane Avril were shown in this exhibition, though only one was illustrated in the catalogue. The illustration, labeled no. 81 possibly in error, is of the c. 1892 *Jane Avril in the Entrance to the Moulin Rouge* (The Courtauld Gallery, London; D P417), listed in the catalogue as no. 5. Catalogue 81, titled *Jane Avril*, is not illustrated, and may therefore be this picture.
14. No catalogue for this exhibition seems to have been published, but the exhibition does appear as having taken place at Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, in 1937 in a list published in Paris 1974a.