



**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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James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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**281 | Bay of Naples, Evening** 1881

Oil on canvas, 57.9 x 80.8 cm

Lower left: Renoir. 81.

1955-587

*Bay of Naples, Evening* was painted in late November 1881, about a month after *Venice, the Doge's Palace* (cat. 278), but the two canvases are markedly different in treatment and effect. Whereas the Venice scene is loosely brushed and variegated in touch, *Bay of Naples, Evening* is more thinly painted, and its brushwork is more regular and less emphatic. This change may be seen as the result of Renoir's experiences of the paintings by Raphael in Rome and the murals from Pompeii and Herculaneum that he saw in the museum in Naples (see *Blonde Bather*; cat. 279), but such contrasts between works that are close in date recur throughout his career, as in his views of Yport and Guernsey of 1883 (see cats. 285, 286), where the more systematic canvas preceded the freely brushed one.

Renoir adopted a viewpoint looking eastward across the Bay of Naples toward Mount Vesuvius, viewing the scene from an upstairs window near the northeast corner of the Piazza Municipio, overlooking the Strada del Piliero and Porto Grande. This was not, as has been suggested, the location of the hotel

in which he was staying, the Albergo della Trinacria, which was in the Piazza Principessa Margherita, near the church of San Pietro Martire, about a quarter of a mile away, and a little inland from the port.<sup>1</sup>

There is a marked contrast between the busy foreground and the sunlit expanses beyond. The roadway, busy with passing traffic, is reminiscent of Renoir's street scenes of the quays and boulevards of Paris, apart from certain small details that are distinctively Neapolitan, such as the woman carrying a burden on her head at bottom right and the little figure running down the roadway to the left of center, bearing something on poles across the shoulders. Out on the bay, we see a range of different local boats set against the sunlit shoreline. Beyond the imagery of city and port, we see the silhouette of Mount Vesuvius, familiar from many images over the previous century, but with the depiction of the mountain's two peaks, Renoir virtually ignored the customary associations of views of the Bay of Naples. A small and seemingly benign puff of smoke on the right peak is the only hint of its volcanic power, which had formed a potent image through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Despite its looming presence and memories of its most recent eruption in 1872, the whole scene seems serene and untroubled.

The overall tonality of the canvas is warm, and Renoir used recurrent soft accents throughout the

canvas to create a highly integrated atmospheric effect. Streaks of red and orange recur in the sky and water and on the mountain, picked up by sequences of accents on the figures and road in the foreground and by a series of small, crisp red verticals on the far side of the bay, immediately to the left of the central sailing boat, whose representational function is unclear.

The foreground figures are sketched in with a deft and delicate painterly shorthand that suggests both gestures and costumes without any distracting detail. Beyond this, the sea, mountain, and sky are primarily treated in sequences of soft parallel strokes, running in the main from lower right to upper left, apart from zones in the sky to the left and right of the mountain. At no point do these strokes seem to be used to characterize the forms or textures represented; indeed, in the sea, they seem to work against any sense of the flatness of the water surface. Rather, they function as a way of ordering the canvas; similar parallel strokes can be seen in parts of *Onions* (cat. 280), also painted during Renoir's stay in Naples. Superficially, they resemble the sequences of parallel strokes that Paul Cézanne was using in these years, though they are not used as Cézanne used them, to build up a sense of form and space through modulations of color.

The painting is executed on an off-white priming, but there are signs of dark paint beneath the present surface in the area of water around the kiosk at lower center; these may be traces of a previous failed start on the canvas, rather than an earlier version of the present image. It seems, too, that the left peak of the mountain was lowered slightly during the execution of the present view.

Although in recent years there has been some confusion as to which of the two paintings shown at the Durand-Ruel Gallery in 1883 is the Clark work, the angle of the sunlight, coming into the scene from low in the southwest and casting long shadows up the roadway, makes it clear that this is the evening canvas of a pair. In the other work shown in 1883, *Bay of Naples, Morning* (fig. 281.1), the sun shines from ahead of the viewer and to the right, casting shadows across the road, and a little more of the city can be seen on the left, including the steeple of the church of Santa Maria del Carmine. The hazy blue tonality of the morning canvas contrasts with the warm golden evening light of the present picture. Such pairs of canvases of the same scene at different times of day were, by this date, frequent in the work of Monet, but they are most unusual in Renoir's work. In this instance, it is likely that Renoir was consciously following his friend's example. JH

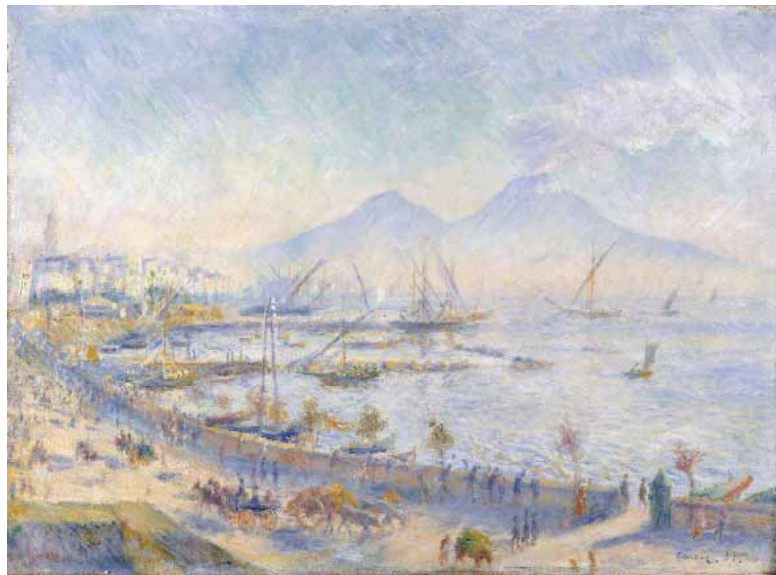


Fig. 281.1. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Bay of Naples, Morning*, 1881. Oil on canvas, 59.7 x 81.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Julia W. Emmons, 1956 (56.135.8)

**PROVENANCE** The artist, sold to Durand-Ruel, Paris, 22 May 1882; [Durand-Ruel, Paris, 1882–88, sold to Durand-Ruel, New York, 11 July 1888]; [Durand-Ruel, New York, 1888–94, sold to Davis, 23 Apr. 1894]; Erwin Davis, New York (1894–99, sold to Durand-Ruel, New York, 9 Apr. 1899); [Durand-Ruel, New York, sold to Durand-Ruel, Paris, 9 Apr. 1899]; [Durand-Ruel, Paris, 1899–1933, sold to Durand-Ruel, New York, 2 Feb. 1933]; [Durand-Ruel, New York, sold to Clark, 3 Mar. 1933]; Robert Sterling Clark (1933–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Paris 1883a, no. 31, as *Naples (soir)*; London 1905a, no. 225, as *View of Naples*; New York 1946–47, no. 8, ill., as *Vue de Naples*; Williamstown 1956b, no. 154, pl. 19; New York 1967, no. 40, as *Vesuvius*; New York 1974b, no. 25, ill., as *The Bay of Naples with Vesuvius in the Background*; Williamstown 1996–97, pp. 23, 28, 79–80, ill.; Rome 2008, pp. 148–49, no. 13, ill. p. 149, and on back cover; Madrid 2010–11, pp. 74, 93–96, 116, no. 19, ill.

**REFERENCES** Vollard 1920, p. 104, as *Quai de la ville avec le Vésuve au fond* (English ed., p. 104); Meier-Graefe 1929, p. 158, fig. 143; Barnes and de Mazia 1935, pp. 77, 79–81, 454, no. 122, as *Vesuvius*; Venturi 1939, vol. 1, p. 58; Florisoone 1942, p. 122, ill.; Faison 1958, p. 174, as *Naples Landscape*; Rewald 1961, p. 461, ill.; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 132, ill., as *Vesuvius*; Wilenski 1963, p. 339; Sterling and Salinger 1955–67, vol. 3, p. 155; Young 1967, p. 382; White 1969, pp. 338–39, 343, 345, no. 9, fig. 18, as *Vesuvius, Morning*; Fezzi 1972, p. 110, no. 490, ill. (French ed., p. 108, no. 468, ill.); Pach 1973, p. 52, ill.; Callen 1978, p. 74, fig. 57, as *Vesuvius: The Port of Naples*; Nakayama 1979, p. 84; Open University 1982, p. 18, pl. 3; White 1984, pp. 116, 122, 127, ill.; Nagoya–Hiroshima–Nara 1988–89, p. 231; Eitner 1988, vol. 1, p. 381, as *Vesuvius, Morning* (rev. ed., p. 393); De Grada 1989, p. 74, fig. 51; De Vries-Evans 1992, p. 175; Distel 1993, ill. p. 81; Ivinski 1997, p. 535; Kern 1997, p. 57, fig. 12; Rome 1999, p. 40; Néret 2001, p. 153, ill., as *Vesuvius in the Morning*; Williamstown–New

York 2006–7, p. 77; London–Ottawa–Philadelphia 2007–8, p. 249–50, fig. 112; Dauberville and Dauberville 2007–10, vol. 1, p. 220, no. 166, ill.; Watson 2008, pp. 199–200n29.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a moderately fine-weave linen (22 threads/cm) attached by glue or paste to a coarser fabric (16 x 19 threads/cm) on a replaced six-member mahogany stretcher. The lack of an export stamp suggests that the picture was lined in the United States, possibly in the 1940s, or perhaps for Durand-Ruel just prior to Clark's 1933 purchase. The surface shows some moated heavier impastos and some that appear melted. Examinations in ultraviolet and infra-red light suggest a number of old repaired damages, possibly punctures, in the upper left sky, one covered by an area of repaint 4 cm in diameter. The edges are also repainted. There are small diagonal traction cracks throughout the surface and long dark horizontal age cracks in the upper half and center of the image. The two upper corners also display diagonal corner stress cracks from bearing the heavy paint layer prior to lining. The red glaze color is cracked where thickly applied. In 2010, numerous scattered retouchings were removed along with many old varnish and grime residues trapped in and around all the heavy brushwork. The painting was then lightly varnished with Soluvar Gloss, and new fills and inpainting were done, using acrylic colors, in the old losses and to reintegrate the edges and old repairs in the sky.

The ground is an off-white layer, probably commercially prepared. The left edge was extended 3 to 5 cm by regrounding and repainting at an early date, probably by the artist. Since the first "R" of the artist's final signature lies over the extended paint, it seems likely that Renoir reworked the painting, and it is possible that the odd repaints in the left part of the sky were done by him as well. Remnants of an earlier blue signature are still visible just above the final placement. No underdrawing was found, although some figures and buildings seem to have been sketched in blue paint during the painting process. A possible change in the paint layer in the skyline at the left, where the skyline may once have been higher, was made visible through the use of infrared reflectography. The paste-consistency paint is applied with diagonal brushwork running in both directions; it is up to five layers thick in some areas, with the thickest impastos being in the white and yellow details. There may even be another painting below the visible one. The complexity of the paint techniques and surface patterns suggest that the painting took several days to complete.

1. The name and address of the inn are given in Renoir's letter from Naples to Charles Deudon, in Schneider 1945, p. 97.
2. See Boston 1978.

## 282 | Child with a Bird (Mademoiselle Fleury in Algerian Costume) 1882

Oil on canvas, 126.4 x 78.1 cm

Lower right: Renoir. 82.

1955.586

Speaking to Ambroise Vollard late in his life, Renoir commented about his second trip to Algeria in the early spring of 1882: "There I made a life-sized portrait of a young girl named Mlle. Fleury, dressed in Algerian costume, in the setting of an Arab house, holding a bird."<sup>1</sup> Sterling Clark, viewing the painting in Durand-Ruel's gallery in New York in 1929, noted that the model was the "little daughter of the Governor General of Algeria";<sup>2</sup> when he bought the canvas from Durand-Ruel in 1937, the invoice identified her as "daughter of the governor general of Algiers."<sup>3</sup> No general named Fleury was ever governor general in Algiers, but two French generals with that name seem to have been serving in Algeria when Renoir was there, Émile-Félix Fleury (1815–1884) and Paul-Louis-Félix Fleury (1831–1915). Although the latter had two daughters,<sup>4</sup> the precise identity of Mademoiselle Fleury cannot be determined.

The status of the picture, too, is ambiguous. Its scale and elaboration might suggest that it was a commissioned portrait, but there is no evidence to support this contention. Renoir brought it back from Algiers to Paris and sold it to the dealer Durand-Ruel in May 1882; it was included in the one-artist show that the dealer mounted of Renoir's work in April 1883 with the title *L'Enfant à l'oiseau*, indicating that it should be viewed as a genre painting, not as a portrait. It is possible, however, that the picture was originally commissioned as a portrait but was rejected by Mademoiselle Fleury's father (see also cat. 275).

Viewed as a genre painting, it falls into the category of pictures of models who are evidently European wearing "Oriental" or North African costumes, and can be compared with Renoir's own *Femme d'Alger*, a canvas depicting his mistress Lise Tréhot in Algerian costume, exhibited at the 1870 Salon (now known as *Odalisque*; National Gallery of Art, Washington). *Child with a Bird*, however, is different in two crucial respects: it was painted in North Africa and it presents the model in an "Arab house"—an explicitly local building. Only the girl's fair hair and skin prevent it from being viewed as a straightforward representation of an "exotic" type. The bird, traditionally described as a falcon, has been