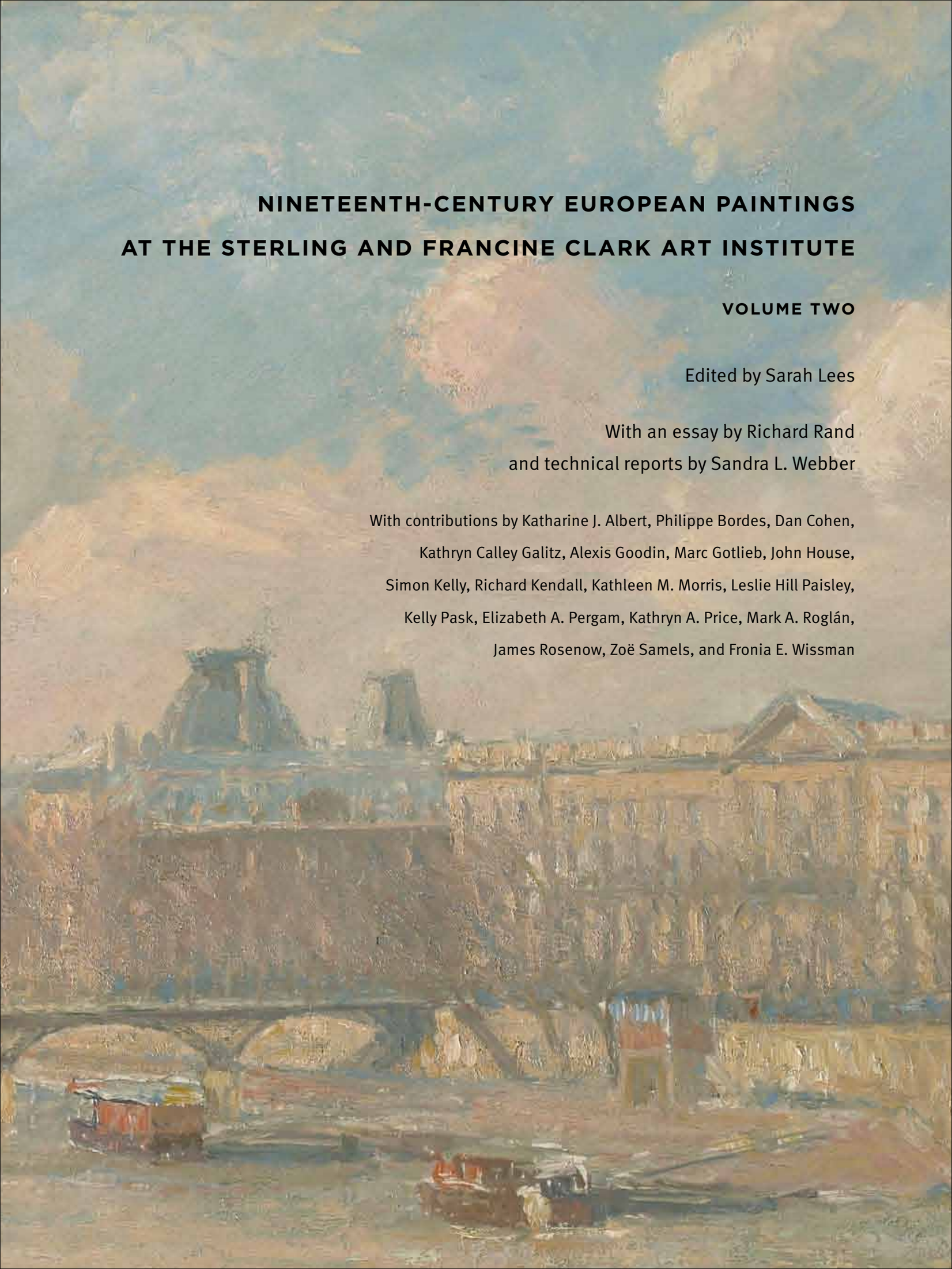

NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE

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, Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley, Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán, James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a moderate-weave linen (19 threads/cm), which has been restretched over a loose linen lining (no adhesive) onto the original six-member stretcher. The artist's tacking margins have two sets of holes, and the added canvas has its own set of tacks holding it to the stretcher. This treatment was probably done prior to Mr. Clark's acquisition of the painting in 1939. There are scattered age cracks, most very fine in aperture. Cracks on the proper right shoulder and diagonal cracks in the hat are cupped forward. The left and lower edges show evidence of protection from fading, and if these edges reveal the true intensity of the original purplish-red color, the color balance of the painting is now considerably altered toward the blue and yellow, since the red has presumably faded from some areas. Multiple varnish layers were cleaned in 1980. There are retouches along most edges, especially the bottom and lower right, probably due to the unfinished nature of the original composition.

The ground is comprised of commercially applied off-white layers. No underdrawing or lower paint sketch was discovered. The artist handled the paint in broad, thin to moderately thick paste-consistency strokes, with some unblended brush marks visible in the shirt being 1.3–1.9 cm wide. There are impastos in the eye highlights, shirt, stickpin, and pipe. The total effect produced is a dry, sketchy appearance.

1. Vollard's presentation of his conversations with Renoir juxtaposes his account of his relationship with Fournaise with mention of his painting at nearby La Grenouillère in the late 1860s (Vollard 1938, pp. 164–65); there is no firsthand evidence, however, that he frequented the Maison Fournaise before 1875.
2. Vollard 1938, p. 165; the accuracy of Vollard's account is perhaps called into question by his inaccurate description of the painting itself, as showing Fournaise "in the white vest of a café owner (*limonadier*), drinking his absinthe" (avec sa veste blanche de limonadier et en train de prendre son absinthe).
3. See Washington 1996–97, p. 37; London–Ottawa–Philadelphia 2007–8, p. 170.
4. Vollard 1938, p. 165: "Cette toile, qui passait pour le comble de la vulgarité, est subitement devenue d'une facture distinguée, lorsque j'ai commencé à faire de gros prix à l'Hôtel Drouot. Et ces mêmes gens qui parlent aujourd'hui avec le plus de conviction de la manière raffinée du portrait du *Père Fournaise* ne se seraient pas fendus de cinq louis pour un portrait, à une époque où cinq louis m'auraient été utiles!"
5. RSC Diary, 13 Jan. 1939.

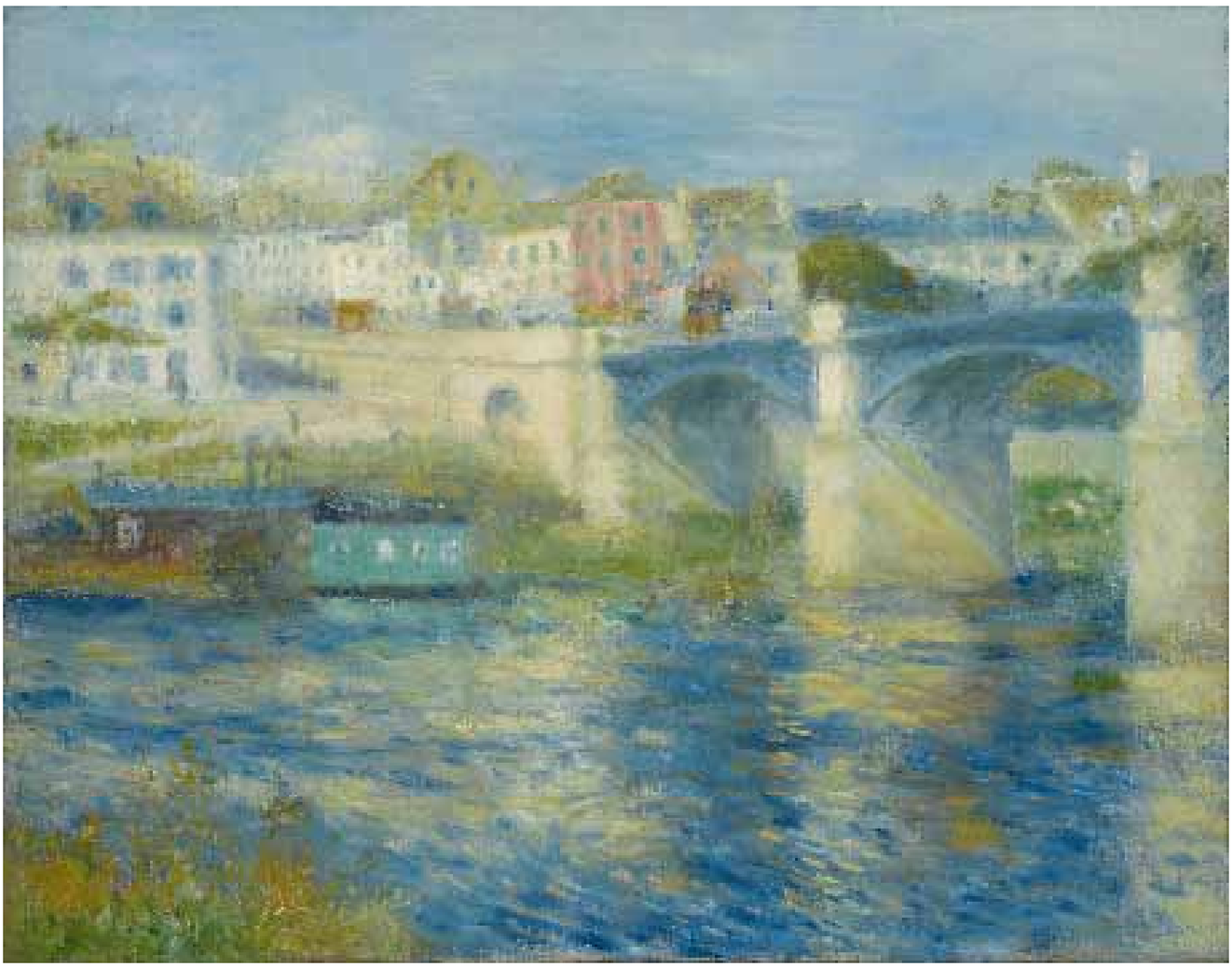
265 | **Bridge at Chatou** c. 1875

Oil on canvas, 51.1 x 65.4 cm
Lower right: Renoir.
1955.591

It was in 1875 that Renoir began to paint at the Maison Fournaise, located on an island in the Seine alongside the village of Chatou, about nine miles (15 km) west of Paris. His portraits of the proprietor Alphonse Fournaise (see cat. 264) and his daughter Alphonsine (*Woman Smiling*; Museu de Arte, São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand) are both dated 1875, and it seems very likely that *Bridge at Chatou* was painted in the same summer. The canvas represents the village as seen from alongside the Maison Fournaise, with the bridge that then ran across the river just to the north of the Maison, and the entrance to the rue de Seine (the present bridge is sited further to the south and the buildings have been destroyed); late nineteenth-century photographs confirm this identification.[1]

Writing in 1886, Louis Barron described the river crossing at the Chatou bridge as the transition between the "rough banlieue" of Paris and the "civilized countryside"—between the realms of work and recreation, between the factories on the east bank of the river and the "coquettish villas" of Chatou on the west bank.[2] Viewed in these terms, Fournaise's restaurant, on the island mid-stream, could be seen as an emblem of this transition from labor to leisure. Chatou was also a "favorite site, a paradise" for fishermen, even if they caught few fish there;[3] the two figures in the rapidly sketched boat in the center of Renoir's canvas do indeed seem to be fishing. La Grenouillère, one of the most celebrated recreational sites in the vicinity of Paris, painted by both Renoir and Monet, was only a short distance downstream from Chatou. In *Bridge at Chatou*, however, Renoir presents a thoroughly urbanized view of the place, closing off the entire background of the canvas with rows of humdrum buildings, with no trace of the "artificial paradise" that Barron found there.[4] This is one of the landscapes in Renoir's oeuvre where the natural world plays the smallest part.

Bridge at Chatou is closely comparable to the views of the Argenteuil road bridge painted by Monet in 1874 (e.g., *The Bridge at Argenteuil*, Musée d'Orsay [fig. 265.1], and *The Bridge at Argenteuil*, National Gallery of Art, Washington); the resemblance is so close



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that in this instance Renoir was presumably deliberately following Monet's example. The bridge frames the composition on the right and leads the eye into the pictorial space, while the area of grass at bottom left gives the viewer a visual foothold. The brushwork throughout is lively and variegated, suggesting the diverse textures of the scene. Nevertheless, as so often in his work (see *Venice, the Doge's Palace* [cat. 278]), Renoir paid less close attention than did Monet to the detailed play of reflections in the water; their forms here do not closely match the positions of the structures above them, but seem, rather, to be arranged so as to maximize the contrast between the reflections and the intense blue of the open water. This distinction between blue and yellow is reiterated in the upper half of the canvas, with the single orange-red building at the far end of the bridge acting as a pivot against which the remainder of the color composition is balanced.

The painting was bought, presumably directly from Renoir, by Ernest Hoschedé, proprietor of a company that made fabrics for women's clothing, and one of the

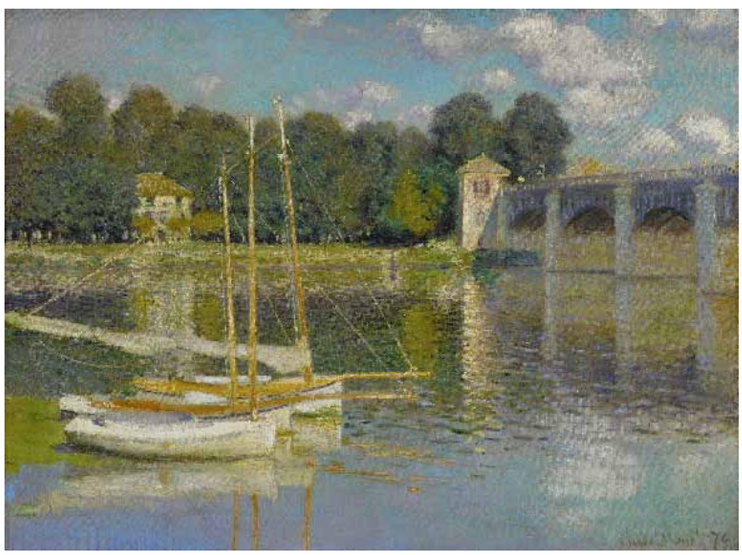

Fig. 265.1. Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926), *The Bridge at Argenteuil*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 60.3 x 80 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Impressionists' principal supporters in the mid-1870s. At the auction sale following Hoschedé's bankruptcy in 1878, another of the pioneer Impressionist collectors, the homeopathic doctor Georges de Bellio, purchased the painting for the derisory sum of forty-two francs.[5] JH

PROVENANCE Ernest Hoschedé, Paris, probably bought from the artist (until 1878, his sale, Drouot, Paris, 6 June 1878, no. 74, sold to de Bellio); Georges de Bellio, Paris (1878–d. 1894); Victorine and Eugène Donop de Monchy, Paris, de Bellio's daughter and son-in-law, by descent (from 1894); Georges Hoentschel, Paris (d. 1915); [Knoedler, Paris, sold to Clark, 13 Oct. 1925]; Robert Sterling Clark (1925–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1956b, no. 137, pl. 2.; Chicago 1973, no. 18, ill.; Tübingen 1996, pp. 146–47, no. 33, ill.; Williamstown 1996–97, pp. 55, 58, 72, 74, ill.; Tokyo–Nagoya 2001, pp. 68–69, no. 7, ill.; London–Ottawa–Philadelphia 2007–8, pp. 58–59, 166–67, 240, 247, no. 32, ill.; Madrid 2010–11, pp. 50–53, 59, 92, no. 4, ill.

REFERENCES Meier-Graefe 1911, p. 58 (French ed., p. 54); Rewald 1946, p. 275, ill.; Rewald 1961, p. 348, ill.; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 108, ill.; Bodelsen 1968, pp. 339–40; Niculescu 1970, pp. 32, 73, pl. 20; Fezzi 1972, p. 96, no. 150, ill. (French ed., p. 95, no. 146, ill.); Nakayama 1978, p. 162, ill.; Nakayama 1979, p. 68; Vacant 1988, ill. bet. pp. 152–53; Nagoya–Hiroshima–Nara 1988–89, p. 231; Distel 1990, pp. 104, 119–20; De Vries-Evans 1992, p. 175; Jeromack 1996, p. 84; Wilkin 1996, p. 49; Dauberville and Dauberville 2007–10, vol. 1, p. 197, no. 136, ill.; Distel 2009, p. 117, fig. 100.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine-weave canvas (28 threads/cm), glue-lined to a coarse fabric (16 threads/cm), and the lining is very taut. The six-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher is probably a replacement. The artist's tacking margins survive. There is some solvent abrasion and retouching, and during a 1979 cleaning some of the earlier overpaint was left in place. The varnish that was partially removed in 1979 was very tenacious, and brown residues still remain trapped in the textured paint. There is presently overpaint along one inch at the top of the picture, and on parts of the right and lower left sides. In ultraviolet light, small retouches can be seen in the sky and the tiled roofs. The paint is pitted through three layers in some areas, such as a band (2.5 cm wide) along the bottom, and there are yellow, red, orange, green, and blue glazes damaged in the architectural details and the signature. Under low magnification, abrasion is most noticeable in the signature and in a figure that has all but disappeared from a small boat in the center. There may be some blanching of dark blue strokes, and possibly some fading of the purplish red pigment.

The ground is a thin, commercially applied, cool white, water-sensitive layer. No underdrawing was detected. Although difficult to confirm, there may be a blue paint sketch beneath the completed painting, visible in parts of the bridge and the left shoreline buildings in the middle ground. The paint was occasionally applied wet-into-wet, but much of the surface seems to have dry scumbles applied after the thicker and more vehicular lower strokes were set. Wide brushes were used for the greater part of the image.

1. One example from the Musée de l'Île-de-France, Château de Sceaux, is reproduced in Washington 1996–97, p. 37; see also the postcards reproduced in Los Angeles–New York–London 1990–91, p. 145.
2. Barron 1886, p. 493: "la banlieue fruste," "la campagne civilisée," and "villas coquettes."
3. Joanne 1872, p. 176: "leur lieu de predilection, leur paradis."
4. Barron 1886, p. 494: "paradis artificiel."
5. See Bodelsen 1968, pp. 339–40.

266 | Self-Portrait c. 1875

Oil on canvas, 39.1 x 31.6 cm
Lower right: Renoir.
1955.584

Despite its small scale and informal, improvised execution, *Self-Portrait* was one of the seventeen canvases that Renoir exhibited at the second Impressionist group exhibition in April 1876. Émile Porcheron's review of the show makes it clear that it was exhibited, describing a self-portrait by Renoir "painted entirely in hatching";[1] the present canvas is the only one that fits this description. It seems likely that this was the painting displayed with the title *Tête d'homme*. It was among the six works by Renoir lent to the show by the collector Victor Chocquet, who had first met him and bought his work at the auction sale organized by Renoir and his colleagues in March 1875. Chocquet sold the canvas to another of Renoir's early collectors, the homeopathic doctor Georges de Bellio, probably soon after the exhibition. Renoir later gave a perhaps romanticized account of this transaction: "Do you remember that little portrait I did of myself, that paltry sketch that everyone praises nowadays? At the time, I had thrown it in the rubbish bin, but since Chocquet asked me to let him take it, I had to agree, even though