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

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EXHIBITIONS Williamstown–Hartford 1974, no. 4, ill.; Osaka and others 1994, no. 9, ill.

REFERENCES Lucie-Smith and Dars 1976, fig. 53; Offenstadt 1999, pp. 234–35, no. 304, ill., as *Café by the Sea*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined, very finely woven linen (28 thread/cm). The reverse is marked at the top with a partially legible colorman's stamp, possibly "[. . .] APRIN Paris," and on the lower stretcher bar with a partially covered "CHASS [. . .] ERGES." The original stretcher is a very unusual design, having four principal members, with keyable wood cross-braces in each corner. The slight cockling of the canvas along the top edge is probably due to the inability of the stretcher to provide proper and even tension. There are some drying cracks in the awning, as well as old scrapes made when the paint was still wet. When a discolored varnish was reduced in 1993, older, very brown varnish residues were noted, and deposits of yellowed varnish remain in the impasto recesses. A layer of older natural resin is found over the black and red areas, the costume, and the awning. The surface reflectance is very shiny over areas of the older varnish, and the discoloration of oldest varnish residues is visible in the blue-gray leaves at the lower right.

The commercially applied ground is a smoothly textured cool white or pale gray layer. There is a pencil line along the cut-back edge of the lower tacking margin. Gray paint wash can be seen below the graphite underdrawing. The sparkly drawing lines, which are not visible using infrared equipment, follow the forms exactly. The vehicular paint is applied in thin washes and low impastos, and is worked wet-into-wet within the bounds of individual forms. The highest sharp impastos occur in the veins of the leaves in the lower right and the white smoke from the distant ship. The red costume elements are painted in a thin, transparent glaze pigment.

1. Herbert 1988, p. 76.
2. Offenstadt 1999, p. 236, no. 307.

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Oil on panel, 56 x 37.6 cm
Lower right: Jean Béraud
1955.642

"I find everything but Paris wearisome," wrote Jean Béraud to his friend the artist Alfred Roll (1846–1919).[1] He painted his city in every imaginable condition: day, night, inside, outside, sunny, rainy, and windy. No subject went unnoticed with Béraud, no person was too rich or too poor to be painted, no street corner could hide from his brush. As artists had done before him, Béraud designed a movable studio, one that would allow him to work in the comfort of a horse-drawn carriage. Rather ironically, in the case of *Windy Day, Place de la Concorde*, it shielded Béraud from Paris's wind and rain, making for a much more efficient and productive working process. Journalist Paul Hourie described his practice in 1880: "When you paint scenes from everyday life, you have to place them in their context and give them their authentic setting. This means that, in order to be sincere, you have to photograph them on the spot, and forget about the conventions of the studio. As a result, Jean Béraud has the strangest life imaginable. He spends all his time in carriages. It is not unusual to see a cab parked at the corner of a street for hours on end, with an artist sitting inside, firing off rapid sketches. That's Jean Béraud, in search of a scene, drawing a small fragment of Paris. Almost all the cab drivers in the city know him. He's one of their favourite passengers, because he at least doesn't wear their horses out."[2]

The fashionably dressed young woman in *Windy Day, Place de la Concorde* carries her purple hatbox across the square, all the while clutching her beautifully appointed hat. The hat has feathers that are purple, red, teal, and blue, with a bright green ribbon in front. She wears a mutton-leg sleeved jacket, popular in the 1890s, but still somewhat slim compared to the blousy mutton-leg styles that appeared at the end of the century. Her double-breasted coat with its turquoise-colored buttons is open. She wears a navy dress underneath and black boots with little white buttons. Her reddish-blond hair matches her gold gloves as well as the gold lining decoration on her hat. Béraud was fond of depicting women in profile or in a three-quarter pose to show off the silhouette of their dresses, and thus their small waists. He often painted the typical Parisienne, with her fashionable attire and wistful gaze, and sometimes included a man observing her from a distance, a modern *flâneur* out for his daily stroll. In *Windy Day*, the focus is instead on the young woman alone, absorbed in her struggle against the elements.

Windy Day, Place de la Concorde centers on what many guidebooks noted as the most expansive and impressive square in Paris. Karl Baedeker described it in 1888 as the "most beautiful and extensive *place* in Paris, and one of the finest in the world."[3] John Murray's handbook for visitors to Paris stated in 1870: "This is without doubt one of the grandest and most

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imposing open spaces in any city, and is the culminating point of the splendour of Paris."[4]

The Place de la Concorde also has a long and turbulent history. As famous for the violence that has taken place there as for its grand expanses, the square has been known by a number of different names, including the Place de la Révolution in 1792, when Louis XVI and Maximilien Robespierre were among 1,300 who were beheaded there. The name was changed back to Place de la Concorde in 1830, as it had been in 1795, symbolizing the desire for peace and harmony in France and for the plaza to have no overt political significance.

The most visible structure in the background of this image is the Assemblée Nationale (French

National Assembly), across the Seine on the Left Bank, housed in the eighteenth-century Palais Bourbon. To the left of this Neoclassical building are the two steeples of Sainte-Clotilde, a Gothic church begun in 1846. Significantly, Béraud's placement in the Place de la Concorde avoided depicting the famous 3300-year-old Obelisk of Luxor in the plaza, a 75-foot tall monolith of reddish granite inscribed with vertical rows of hieroglyphics that was awarded by the Viceroy of Egypt to Louis-Philippe and erected in 1836. In fact, none of Béraud's thirteen paintings of the Place de la Concorde depict the obelisk, which stood in the former location of the guillotine.[5] Given the lighthearted nature of his images, Béraud's choice of viewpoint was probably intentional, allowing him to disregard the violent history of the site.

Each of Béraud's paintings in the Place de la Concorde depicts the square from a different angle. All but one includes the Palais Bourbon in the distance, and the one that does not show it may be a sketch.[6] Of those that have been dated, the earliest dates to about 1875 and the latest to about 1895. Very few of these works feature inclement weather, including rain, and only one other uses wind as the "subject"—*Strong Wind, Place de la Concorde* (private collection).[7] This is the most like the Clark painting in its placement in the square as well as in the subject of the picture itself. Another similar scene is *Winter in Paris* (private collection), where Béraud used almost exactly the same background, complete with horse and carriage at left, the two spires of Sainte-Clotilde, the rostral column, and the Palais Bourbon.[8] In all of these pictures, he left the space of the Place around the featured woman practically empty. For effect in *Windy Day, Place de la Concorde*, diagonal lines emphasize the force and direction of the wind. Béraud often used humorous anecdotes in his paintings, which were popular with collectors and attest to the market for these appealing scenes. In *Windy Day* (as in *Strong Wind*), men in the background have lost their top hats and lurch forward chasing after them, pushed by the wind.

Sterling and Francine Clark bought *Windy Day, Place de la Concorde* in 1945, adding to their collection of two paintings by Béraud that they had purchased in 1939. KAP

PROVENANCE [Knoedler, Paris]; M. Tannenbaum, New York (in 1901); [William O'Leary, Detroit, in 1904]; [Schneider-Gabriel Galleries, New York, sold to Clark, 17 Nov. 1945]; Robert Sterling Clark (1945–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown–Hartford 1974, pp. 18–19, no. 3, ill.; Williamstown 1979b, no cat.; Williamstown 1980a, no cat.; Williamstown 1982a, no. 1; Tokyo–Kagawa–Nara 1992–93, no. 10, ill.

REFERENCES Offenstadt 1999, pp. 128–29, no. 92, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a mahogany panel 0.8 cm thick, with the wood grain running vertically. The attached cradle has five fixed molded mahogany bars and six pine sliding bars. The panel has a small 3.3-cm crack in the lower left. The paint and ground layers are in good condition. In 1992, the painting was cleaned of tar and nicotine deposits and yellowed varnish. At that time, a previous cleaning was noted, as well as the overpaint used to extend the edges of the image. In ultraviolet light small new retouches can be seen in the sky and along the crack and edges. The extension of the image size suggests that the present frame is not original, and may be too large in sight-size for the image.

The off-white ground was most likely commercially applied and bears a smooth surface. The picture's top and bottom borders have a layer of tan overpaint. Dark underdrawing lines of various weights, possibly in graphite, can be detected using infrared reflectography. Heavier lines can be seen on the roofline of the distant building, the lamp posts, and the hat, as well as following the original perimeter of the image. Lighter weight lines briefly indicate both the costume and the trees. The paint is applied wet-into-wet within the border delineated by the artist. The paint is quite thin and sketchy, especially in the foreground. The brushwork is lively throughout the surface, with occasional white impastos. Black ink may have been used as the lower layer in the hat. The entire picture has a pale blue cast.

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1. Quoted in Offenstadt 1999, p. 14.
2. Hourie 1880; translation from Offenstadt 1999, p. 9.
3. Baedeker 1888, p. 81.
4. Murray 1870, p. 93.
5. Béraud painted eleven pictures with Place de la Concorde in the title and two additional works in that location without naming it (O 89–101).
6. O 96.
7. O 93.
8. O 98.