



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

**VOLUME ONE**

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With an essay by Richard Rand  
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With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,  
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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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painting was made as a tribute to the Dandrés, who may have been friends of the artist.<sup>5</sup> Yet as Susan Siegfried has pointed out, this idea hardly accounts for the other objects so tantalizingly re-created by Boilly.<sup>6</sup> Whatever meaning this particular arrangement may have had for the Dandrés (if they indeed were the intended recipients of the picture) remains lost to us today. There is always the possibility, as suggested by Philip Conisbee, that this odd assortment was intentionally random, an example of a type of *trompe l'oeil* known as *quodlibet* (“what you please”), a haphazard grouping of miscellaneous objects emptied from a pocket or drawer.<sup>7</sup> The viewer of such an arrangement of disparate things is left to imagine or invent connections between the objects and to admire the artist’s virtuosic technique and mimetic skill. RR

**PROVENANCE** Possibly Jules Lenglard, Lille;<sup>8</sup> Sacha Guitry, Paris (d. 1957); sale, Palais Galliera, Paris, 28 Nov. 1972, no. 8, ill.; private collection, Lille (in 1976); [Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London, sold to the Clark, 15 Jan. 1981]; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1981.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1982b, no. 4, ill., as *Trompe l'oeil*; Williamstown 1983c, no cat.; Washington 2002–3, pp. 180, 199, no. 40, ill., as *Trompe l'Oeil*; Lille 2011–12, pp. 236–37, no. 163, ill.

**REFERENCES** HARRISSE 1898, p. 138, no. 582, as *Divers objets*; FARÉ 1962, vol. 1, p. 243, vol. 2, fig. 460; FARÉ and FARÉ 1976, p. 318, fig. 510, as *Trompe l'Oeil*; HALLAM 1979, p. 13, fig. 2; GBA Suppl. 1982, p. 52, fig. 267; ELIEL 1985, pp. 31, 148, fig. 1; SIEGFRIED 1992, p. 29, fig. 3; FORT WORTH–WASHINGTON 1995–96, pp. 184–85, figs. 157, 158; CHASTEL 1996, p. 300, ill.; HELD 1997, pp. 506, 508, ill.; BRÉTON and ZUBER 2007, pp. 62–64, fig. 5; MIAMI and others 2006–8, p. 113, ill.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The original support is a coarse canvas with a weave of 9 x 13 threads per cm, which is glue-lined to bleached linen with a weave of 16 threads per cm. The lining is relatively recent and may date to just before the 1981 purchase. The canvas is quite damaged, with several old tears that all have an irregular gloss detectable in reflected light. The largest damage is a horizontal tear (30.5 cm long) through the center starting near the tip of the scissors. There is a smaller complex tear in the leftmost letter, and possibly a third tear in the center of the leather bag. The repainting associated with these tears involves color spray applications to blend the damages with the original background. The surface shows extensive age crackle and some traction cracks, along with quite severe solvent abrasion. Many small losses at crack intersections have been inpainted, while numerous other triangular-shaped losses at crack sites have never been filled. Isolated impastos have been moated by the lin-

ing pressure. In ultraviolet light, a lower natural resin and an upper synthetic resin coating fluoresce densely, which may indicate a deliberate masking component in the varnish. Broken-up patches of an older varnish are seen as brown islands scattered in the light-colored impastos.

The ground appears to be comprised of several layers of an off-white color, probably applied by the artist. No underdrawing was detected, but this may be due to the brown background color, possibly applied over the entire surface as an imprimatura layer. In many areas the individual elements of the composition do appear painted on top of the background color. The larger particles typical of hand-ground pigments are noticeable under low magnification in the brown background color. All the lettering on the various replicated letters and envelopes was applied with black ink into the wet paint, possibly with a calligraphic pen. The lettering, including the signature in the upper left, also has red shadows or highlights, possibly in ink; this red may have faded to some degree.

1. For a good overview in English of Boilly’s career, see Fort Worth–Washington 1995–96.
2. For comparable works by Doncre, see Hazebrouck–Arras 1989–90, pp. 36 and 71, nos. 96 and 297; Hallam 1979, pp. 12–13.
3. The first time the term was used was as a title for a painting (private collection, Paris) that Boilly exhibited at the Salon de l’an IX (1800). See Bréton and Zuber 2007, p. 64, fig. 6.
4. HARRISSE 1898, p. 138, no. 582.
5. First suggested by ELIEL 1985, p. 31.
6. Fort Worth–Washington 1995–96, pp. 184–85.
7. Washington 2002–3, p. 198.
8. HARRISSE 1898, p. 138, lists the work in the collection of “M. Langlard” in Lille. Jules Lenglard (d. 1901), a grandson of Charles Joseph Marie Lenglard (1740–1816), was a collector in Lille who owned works by Boilly, although this painting was not in the sale of Lenglard’s collection of 10 Mar. 1902.

## 19 | The Artist’s Wife in His Studio c. 1795–99

Oil on canvas, 40.6 x 32.9 cm  
1955.646

In a dark corner of a cluttered atelier, lit by a shaded lamp on the wall and an external light source from the left, a beautiful woman in a white dress leafs through a portfolio of prints and drawings that is resting on a Louis XVI fauteuil. She is surrounded by the materials of the artist’s profession, their textures, forms,



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and colors all lovingly rendered: canvases, drawings and prints, brushes, jars of oil, and plaster casts, including a version of Jean-Pierre Pigalle's celebrated *Mercury Fastening His Heel Wing* (1744).<sup>1</sup> Even music is present in the form of a violin hanging from the armchair. Boilly's picture suggests that from these diverse elements—which draw equally from artistic tradition, observation, and imagination—the painter creates original works of art.

It is unlikely that the young woman is meant to portray an artist, as was suggested when it appeared at the Oger de Bréart sale in Paris in 1886. In fact, the model for the figure had already been identified in an

1869 sale as the artist's wife; more precisely she can be assumed to represent his second wife, Adélaïde Françoise Julie Leduc (1778–1819), whom he married in 1795.<sup>2</sup> With her high cheekbones, widely spaced eyes, and pointed chin, she does indeed closely resemble Madame Boilly as she is rendered in Boilly's drawing dating to about 1795 (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Orléans). Étienne Bréton has noted that her rounded form in the present painting suggests that she is pregnant with one of her sons, either Julien (born 1796) or Édouard (born 1799).<sup>3</sup> These dates provide the plausible time frame in which the picture was completed. In Boilly's portrayal, she turns toward the viewer—her

husband—with a sweet and loving expression; the scenario suggests she is not depicted as an artist herself but as an interloper who has entered the studio to examine a sheaf of prints and drawings. The absent painter is suggested by the plaster cast of a male hand reaching toward her, suspended on the studio wall in the center of the composition. It was not uncommon for Boilly to include depictions of his friends and family (as well as himself) in his genre paintings. While the similarities between the woman and Boilly's wife are clear, the painting is less a straightforward portrait than a play on the traditional personification of the artist's muse as a woman. Madame Boilly stands before a blank canvas onto which she casts a shadow. The artist invites us to imagine her transformed on that canvas into a work of art, something, of course, that he has already accomplished for us.

At least three other versions of the painting, not necessarily by Boilly himself, are known, testament to the composition's popularity.<sup>4</sup> Given the appearance of the picture in a succession of auctions between 1869 and 1909, it is very possible that one or more of those sales notices refer not to the Clark painting but to one of the other versions. RR

**PROVENANCE** Sale, Drouot, Paris, 25 Feb. 1869, no. 5, as *Son épouse*; possibly sale, Drouot, Paris, 12 May 1883, no. 4, as *Portrait de Mme Boilly*; Louise Suzanne Oger de Bréart, Paris (d. 1886; her sale, Paris, 17–22 May 1886, no. 3, as *La jeune artiste*); sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 2 May 1894, no. 1, as *La jeune artiste*; Félix Doistau, Paris (until 1909, his sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 9 June 1909, no. 5, as *La jeune artiste*); Alfred de Rothschild, London (d. 1918, bequeathed to Wombwell); Almina Victoria Marie Alexandra Wombwell, 5th Countess of Carnarvon, his daughter (1918–25, her sale, Christie's, London, 22 May 1925, no. 54, ill., as *The Artist's Wife in His Studio*, sold to Knoedler); [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 31 Dec. 1925]; Robert Sterling Clark, 1925–55; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown–Hartford 1974, pp. 21–23, no. 5, ill., as *The Young Artist*; Williamstown 1981b, pp. 9, 46, no. 2, ill. on cover; Williamstown 1994b, pp. 33, 71, no. 34, ill.; Fort Worth–Washington 1995–96, p. 175, pl. 150; Hanover–Toledo–Houston 1997–98, p. 202, no. 51, ill.; Lille 2011–12, pp. 130, 138–39, no. 65, ill. on cover.

**REFERENCES** HARRISSE 1898, p. 114, no. 340, as *La Jeune Artiste*, p. 146, no. 667, as *Madame Boilly [Laquelle?]*;<sup>5</sup> Marmottan 1913, p. 232; Le Corbeiller 1963, p. 28, fig. 7; Hallam 1979, pp. 57–59, fig. 64; Gaborit 1985, p. 42; *Antiques* 1997, pp. 522–31, pl. 12.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a coarse canvas with a weave of approximately 9 x 13 threads per cm, glue-lined to a finer weight canvas with a weave of 16 x 19 threads per cm. The five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher is original, and the lining may date to just before 1925. The stretcher bars, although stable, have rolled forward, causing a slightly dished surface around three edges. There are long diagonal cupped cracks through the paint and ground, probably due to the thickness of the ground layers. Smaller cupped cracks are forming in the upper right and lower left quadrants. Local traction crackle and some pooling and separating can be seen in the dark brown passages, possibly related to over-thinning of the color. The painting was cleaned in 1995 to remove a yellowed natural resin coating. Ultraviolet light shows slight residues along the edges and retouches in the lower left corner. At close range, one wide varnish brush mark is slightly visible, and the plates of paint formed between the long cracks are caught in reflected light.

The ground layers are very white and thick enough to produce a very smooth surface. Sanding or pumice scratch marks are visible in low magnification beneath some thinly painted passages, along with a few nubs of ground that were not sanded down. While only a few underdrawing lines in and around the table were visible in infrared, there is probably a thorough drawing or thin paint sketch. One line was seen to the right of the ceramic jug on the table, indicating a slight location change. The paint layer is very thin, transparent, and vehicular, with strokes applied in a very linear and exact method. During the execution, reserves were left for all the main elements. Although sable brushes were likely used throughout, some stiffer bristles were found in the paint layer.

1. Gaborit 1985, pp. 38–42.

2. Drouot 1869, p. 7, no. 5, as *His [the artist's] Wife* [Son épouse].

3. Personal communication with the author; I wish to extend my thanks to Étienne Bréton for his assistance on all three Boilly entries.

4. See sale, Galerie Fischer, Lucerne, 5 June 1981, no. 47, attributed to Boilly, *La jeune artiste* or *La femme de l'artiste dans l'atelier*, oil on canvas, 41 x 32.5 cm; and sale, Galerie Charpentier, Paris, 7 Dec. 1954, no. 52, attributed to Boilly, *La jeune artiste* or *La femme de l'artiste dans l'atelier*, oil on canvas, 41.5 x 32.5 cm. Another version of the painting, supposedly autograph, was recorded in 1983 in a private collection in Paris (correspondence in the Clark's curatorial file, Mar. 1983).

5. HARRISSE 1898 appears unintentionally to list this painting twice: no. 340 is listed under "paintings" [tableaux] and no. 667 under "painted and drawn portraits" [portraits peints et dessinés]. While the descriptions are similar, the dimensions he gives are different (presumably in error), as are the provenances. The present entry combines the provenance information from both of HARRISSE's entries.