



**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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Pierre Duval Le Camus

French, 1790–1854

132 | The Drawing Lesson c. 1826

Oil on canvas, 32.8 x 24.7 cm

Lower left: Duval. Lecamus 182[6?]

1955.728

Pierre Duval Le Camus, who entered the atelier of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) at the age of sixteen, exhibited regularly in the Salons between 1819 and 1853, as well as in various provincial exhibitions.¹ Although trained by the leading history painter of his day, he specialized in small-scale, full-length portraits and domestic interiors rendered in naturalistic detail that recalled seventeenth-century Dutch prototypes. In 1822, a Salon critic praised Duval Le Camus as “another Drölling,” a reference to the recently deceased artist Martin Drölling (1752–1817), who popularized similar Dutch-influenced genre imagery.² In his review of the Salon of 1833, Charles Lenormant admired the “accuracy of pose and effect, always with a natural touch” of his portraits, while the reviewer for *Le Moniteur universel* in 1831 praised the “perfect observation of nature and above all of domestic customs” characteristic of his genre scenes.³ During the Restoration, the paintings of Duval Le Camus were sought by contemporary collectors, notably the duchesse de Berry, Marie-Caroline de Bourbon-Sicile (1798–1870), who purchased several of his paintings from the Salon of 1824 for her collection of modern art.⁴ His paintings were also widely reproduced as engravings and lithographs, attesting to their popularity.

Views of artists’ studios gained currency in the first half of the nineteenth century, stimulated by the Romantic interest in the lives of artists. Although Duval Le Camus did not exhibit *The Drawing Lesson* at the Salon, a painting with this title (*La Leçon de dessin*)—likely the present work—appears in a list of the artist’s works published in 1831.⁵ By the 1820s, Duval Le Camus ran a studio for women and young people, raising the possibility that this work depicts his own atelier. In it, a young woman executes a drawing in black crayon after a work—possibly a lithograph—mounted on the easel before her. The act of copying was an integral part of an artist’s early training. Also in keeping with contemporary studio practice, a dark curtain covers the lower portion of the window, allow-

ing natural light to come in only from above; it also allows Duval Le Camus to exploit the play of light and shadow over the figures. The gentle rapport between student and teacher suggests an intimate, informal mood, with the presence of the attentive dog adding a note of domesticity. At this time, women artists could train only in private ateliers, as enrollment in the *École des Beaux-Arts* was not open to women until the end of the nineteenth century.

Two other versions of this painting, both unsigned and nearly identical in scale to the present work, are known.⁶ Technical examination of the Clark painting reveals underdrawing below the figures, as well as a modification in the background, where trees were once painted in the lower portion of the window in the area now covered by the dark curtain (see Technical Report). These factors point to the Clark’s picture as the original; the other two paintings were possibly executed by Duval Le Camus’s students, who might have seen the present work in his studio. KCG

PROVENANCE [Vicars Brothers, London]; [Knoedler, London, sold to Clark, 31 July 1939, as *The Drawing Lesson*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1939–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1959b, ill.; Williamstown–Hartford 1974, pp. 48–49, no. 24, ill.; Williamstown 1981b pp. 10, 46, no. 3; Middlebury 2002, no cat.

REFERENCES Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 52, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a coarsely woven linen (possibly 16 threads/cm), glue-lined to a coarser weave linen (13 threads/cm). The reverse of the lining fabric is quite dark and may be deliberately stained. The five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher may be original. The artist’s tacking margins are gone, and the remaining original canvas dimension is slightly smaller than the stretcher size. The lining presumably predates the 1939 purchase. A slight bulge in the lower left corner and a shallow deformation in the upper left are both due to the stretcher’s joinery design. Long shallow age cracks appear throughout, with more prominent radiating cracks in the sky associated with an old repainted damage. There are fine aperture stress cracks across the two lower corners, physical abrasion from the frame rebate along all the edges, and a dent in the surface on the left. The painting had varnish removed and reapplied in 1940 by Beers Brothers via Durand-Ruel in New York. Some solvent abrasion occurs in the dark passages, and there is retouching in the sky in the left half of the window and in the left background. Ultraviolet light examination reveals that the thin natural resin varnish



was applied in horizontal streaky brushstrokes while the picture was framed, leaving pools of resin along the sight edges. The painting has an irregular sheen in reflected light, with the sky being shinier than the rest of the surface.

The off-white ground appears to have been applied in two thick layers, possibly by the artist, presenting a smooth surface. There is an underdrawing below the figures, possibly done with graphite, which is visible using infrared reflectography. Also visible is an apparent alteration in the image, where trees were initially painted in the lower third of the window frame, now covered by the dark window blind. The drawing hanging on the upper left wall is also more readable using infrared light. There is a brown layer below the final paint, discernible at the edges of various forms, and in the hair of the two women. The upper paint is vehicular in consistency and thin to moderately thick in brushwork.

1. On the artist, see Hamel 1979, pp. 21–27.
2. Chaudonneret 1999, p. 90, citing Niquevert 1822, p. 275.
3. Lenormant 1833, vol. 2, pp. 181–82: “justesse de pose et d’effet, à un accent constamment naturel,” and Fabien Pillet, *Le Moniteur universel*, 15 July 1831, cited in Hamel 1979, p. 24: “parfaite observation de la nature et surtout des mœurs domestiques.”
4. Chaudonneret 1999, p. 141. The Clark painting does not appear among the works by Duval Le Camus included in the catalogue of her collection (Berry 1822), nor does it figure in the catalogues of the three sales of her collection, which took place between 1830 and 1837 (Paris, 8 Dec. 1830 [Lugt 12508]; Paris, 22 Feb.–15 Mar. 1836 [Lugt 14225], and Paris, 4–6 Apr. 1837 [Lugt 14643]).
5. Gabet 1831, p. 250.
6. One, unsigned but attributed to Duval Le Camus, is in the collection of the Kurpfälzisches Museum, Heidelberg, inv. 42.21.14 G2058; this information was confirmed by Dr. Annette Frese, Leiterin der Abt. Gemälde und Graphik, in an e-mail of 20 Dec. 2004. The other, attributed to Léon Mathieu Cochereau (1793–1817) or, alternatively, to Antoinette Cécile Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot (1784–1845), was sold at Christie’s, London, on 27 Oct. 2004, no. 77; I am grateful to Asher Miller of the Department of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for noting the work sold at Christie’s.

Henri Fantin-Latour

French, 1836–1904

133 | Bowl of Roses on a Marble Table 1885

Oil on canvas, 36.7 x 53.3 cm

Lower right: Fantin. 85

1955.920

Fantin-Latour first visited London in 1859 at the invitation of James McNeill Whistler, whom he had met while copying paintings at the Louvre the previous year. During this trip, Fantin-Latour probably met Edwin Edwards and his wife Ruth, and on his second visit in 1861, Fantin-Latour stayed with the Edwardses. Edwards, a trained lawyer, was also a printmaker who exhibited at the Royal Academy. He acted as Fantin-Latour’s agent and patron in Britain, promoting his artistic and financial success there with collectors who were anxious to buy the Frenchman’s still-life paintings. Fantin-Latour’s work was readily accepted in Britain, and indeed he exhibited at the Royal Academy regularly between 1862 and 1900. Although two of his paintings appeared at the Paris Salon des Refusés in 1863 (a third was accepted at the Salon), he did not join with other artists who were at odds with the establishment to organize the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874 because he believed that the official Salon was the best venue through which an artist could gain recognition. The following year, Fantin-Latour won a second-class medal (and was judged *hors concours*) at the Salon for his arresting portrait of the Edwardses (1875; The National Gallery, London), the couple who had befriended him and helped define his career. *Bowl of Roses on a Marble Table*, painted at a time when Fantin-Latour’s floral pictures were still highly popular in Britain, was most likely sold or consigned to Ruth Edwards, who acted as Fantin-Latour’s agent after her husband’s death in 1879, the same year Fantin-Latour was awarded the Legion of Honor.

Aside from a few major portraits and group portraits, Fantin-Latour’s legacy lives on mostly in his still lifes, which represent his talent as a realist painter as well as his ability to give presence and liveliness to simple everyday objects, especially flowers. By the time he painted *Bowl of Roses on a Marble Table* in the mid-1880s, Fantin-Latour was recognized as a master of the genre. The elegantly rendered roses in this picture bow under the weight of their own fully bloomed