



**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,
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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
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such as this, probably dating from the late 1870s, are characteristic of his later work, in which he focused primarily on images of bourgeois women out of doors. Though very small, this panel is signed and is clearly a work that the artist considered complete in its own terms. JH

PROVENANCE Robert Sterling Clark (by 1955); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1979b, no cat.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a mahogany panel (1 cm thick), with the grain running in the horizontal direction. Only the left back edge is chamfered, suggesting that the board was cut from a larger prepared panel. Both the bottom and right edges were cut after the painting was completed, which

shattered the paint and ground layers. There is a slight convex warp running from top to bottom. The address of a partial stamp of the colorman Latouche dates the panel's preparation between 1870 and 1886. There are traction cracks in the green running primarily in the vertical direction, and some prevarnishing losses in the green, revealing a lower pink layer. The paint layers also show no evidence of former cleaning. These two conditions suggest that the picture went unvarnished long enough to sustain some aging damage. The painting bears its first natural resin varnish, which is yellowed but still presentable, and has a moderately dense ultraviolet light fluorescence.

The commercially applied ground is a buff-colored layer. While no underdrawing was found for the image, there are lines running 1.3 cm inside the right and 2.2 cm inside the bottom edge, just below the signature. These may relate to the trimming of the panel. There may be a sketch in reddish brown paint below the image. The final colors are loosely brushed out using wet-into-wet strokes, in thin to moderately thick paint. There are low-level impastos scattered over the surface. The presence of a lower pink color below the old flaked green paint suggests that the artist made some changes to the image.

Jean-Jacques Henner

French, 1829–1905

171 | Portrait of a Woman 1864

Oil on canvas, 55.6 x 46.5 cm

Upper right: HENNER / 1864

1955.763

This portrait of an elegant young woman is by Jean-Jacques Henner, an artist whose rather singular mature style sets him apart from his contemporaries. Neither a late Romantic nor a Realist, nor an Impressionist nor even a Symbolist (elements of which appear in his work), Henner embodies a certain ability to combine and personalize a variety of styles and influences. The present painting is from the early portion of his career and hints at both his past and what will become some of the hallmarks of his later works.

Henner was the last of six children born to a peasant couple in the province of Alsace, where he obtained his early artistic training and started making portraits of friends and family members.¹ In 1846, Henner enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, first as a pupil of fellow Alsatian Michel-Martin Drölling (1786–1851), son of the more prominent Martin Drölling (cats. 127–29),



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then in 1851, as a student of François-Édouard Picot (1786–1868). He had some early success, but failed to win the grand prize in 1855 and 1857 that would have sent him to Rome for further studies. Finally, Henner won the Prix de Rome in 1858 and arrived in the Eternal City early the next year for the usual five-year stay. Following tradition, Henner visited Italy's major artistic centers to view the treasures of Renaissance and Baroque painting. He was most influenced by the soft, poetic effects of Correggio and Titian, and made copies of their works, such as the latter's *Venus of Urbino* (1538; Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence). He also copied paintings, now in the Henner Museum in Paris, by Vittore Carpaccio, Andrea del Sarto, and Raphael. Among the painters of his own century, Henner admired Corot,

whose Italian landscapes were a direct inspiration for Henner's own, and Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, who painted in a diffused and sensuous manner that appealed to the young artist. As a winner of the Rome prize, Henner was required to send paintings back to Paris so that members of the Academy could evaluate his progress. His last so-called *envoi* was a large painting of a biblical nude called *The Chaste Suzanne* (1864; Musée d'Orsay, Paris), which occupied him for many of his final months in Rome.

The portrait seen here dates from the same year as *The Chaste Suzanne*, and like that painting, features a similar dark-haired, pale-skinned beauty. Suzanne, however, barely shows her face while exhibiting her naked sensuality, whereas the opposite effect is

obtained here as an unpretentious young woman gazes outward at the viewer in an expectant fashion. Even her décolletage is rather modest, as is the hint of a shawl along the lower edge of the portrait. The tonality of the painting is rather somber, with the dark tones of the woman's hair, eyes, and outfit dominating the creamy flesh tones, except for the hint of a red chair against which the woman rests. When executing the portrait, Henner toyed with the placement of both the hairline and the neckline of the sitter, as there are pentimenti visible in these areas. The woman's face and shoulders are painted in an especially soft manner, with no apparent hard edges or outlines. The painting of her dress has a bit more materiality, as Henner's brushwork is more discernible here.

The sitter for this portrait is as yet unidentified, although she may be either a certain Madame van de Wetge or a Madame de Gabriac, about both of whom nothing further is known.² While the painting under discussion has been catalogued as from the end of Henner's Italian sojourn, there is no indication of costume or setting that would suggest an Italian origin. While in Rome, Henner was fascinated by the local population and made numerous paintings, both portrait studies and genre scenes, of young Italian women, who usually wear traditional peasant garb. His most usual portrait subjects while in Rome were his fellow artists at the Villa Medici or their family members. He did, however, also take on commissioned portraits during this time, as he had in his early years as an artist in Alsace. The present work may fall into either of these last two categories, although it is also possible that its origins were slightly later in Paris, where the artist returned in August 1864.

Back in Paris, Henner enjoyed successes and setbacks in his professional life. Among the former is a depiction of an Alsatian girl (from 1871) that made Henner famous, as it was widely reproduced in engraved form throughout France as a symbol of the loss of Alsace during the Franco-Prussian War.³ Henner finally settled into the somewhat formulaic depiction of a type of red-headed woman, whether nymph or Magdalen, and these images are what he is best known for today. The type was reworked in numerous variants by the artist and later copied by other painters seeking to latch onto his fame. Henner's soft, smoky paint application, learned from his studies of Renaissance and Baroque masters, became a hallmark of his style, and it is evident in the present work.

The career of Jean-Jacques Henner is fairly well

documented, primarily due to the presence of a museum and archive devoted to his work and writings. Unfortunately, despite the close study of a wealth of documentation, the precise circumstances surrounding the Clark painting have not been determined. KP

PROVENANCE [Georges Muller, Paris, sold to Clark, 22 Apr. 1938]; Robert Sterling Clark (1938–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown–Hartford 1974, pp. 56–57, no. 30, ill.

REFERENCES Lannoy 2008, vol. 1, p. 205, no. B.211, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine-weight linen (28 threads/cm) glue-lined in the twentieth century to a bleached linen of coarser weave (16–19 threads/cm). The tacking margins remain, but the stretcher is replaced and slightly torqued. The work was treated in 1950 at Knoedler, although probably only minor work, such as adding varnish, was done at that time. There are impact cracks in a starburst pattern in the left background and a slight weave impression. There are gouges and abrasions from old framing nails, especially along the lower edge. Solvent abrasion is visible in the black costume, and there appears to be considerable reglazing in the background, visible as vertical streaks along the weave. The coatings are very thick, discolored, and murky, making it hard to read the surface in ultraviolet light due to a dense fluorescence. The lower layer of varnish does not extend all the way to the edges.

The ground is an off-white layer. There is less priming on the tacking margins, and diagonal brushwork visible in the upper left background could represent a ground application added by the artist. There is underdrawing possibly in charcoal visible in the ear and the shape of the shoulders, which was altered in the later painting. There are weaker drawing lines in the sitter's neck and the line of her mouth, and the proper right edge of her face was originally wider. The paint handling of the soft-focus, blended sfumato effects of the face contrasts sharply with the vibrant strokes of the costume. The background paint is especially thin. Locally applied thin colors appear to be laid in scumbles over the previously dry, heavily bodied paint of the pale flesh tones.

1. Henner's early works are explored in Mulhouse 1989.
2. The identification of the sitter as Mme van de Wetge comes from an annotation on the back of an old photograph of the painting by the first curator of the Henner Museum. See Lannoy 1989, p. 205, who also suggests the sitter may be Mme de Gabriac based on an 1862 entry in Henner's diary.
3. Now in the Musée National Jean-Jacques Henner, Paris. See Lannoy 1989, vol. 1, p. 249, no. C.107.



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Daniel Hernández

Peruvian, active in France, 1856–1932

172 | Pierrette c. 1878

Oil on panel, 27 x 19 cm
Lower right: Daniel Hernandez
1955.765

This painting was sold to Robert Sterling Clark in 1935 as *Pierrette*, although the picture has also been known as *Girl with Roses* over the years. Hernández treated the subject of a woman in costume several times, including at least two other *Pierrettes*, and two paintings of clowns. The *Pierrette* in the collection of Glasgow’s Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum measures 63.5 x 34.3 cm, quite a bit larger than the Clark painting. A collection catalogue from 1904 describes this version as a “woman in fancy costume, with a fan