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 Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute is published with the assistance of the Getty Foundation and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.





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Albert Lynch

French, born Peru, 1851–after 1912

197 | Portrait by Gaslight c. 1900

Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 25.1 cm Lower left: A. Lynch 1955.796

Albert Lynch enjoyed a successful career in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, gaining some notoriety as a painter of portrait and genre scenes. Originally from Lima, Peru, he moved to Paris as a young man and studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, attending classes by Henri Lehmann (1814–1882) and Gabriel Ferrier (1847–1914). His work was shown in the Paris Salon between 1880 and 1901, and he won a bronze medal in 1890 for his large painting *En Mer* (location unknown). He showed at the 1900 Exposition Universelle, winning a gold medal, and was made *chevalier* of the Legion of Honor in 1901.

Portrait by Gaslight, typical of Lynch's work, depicts a society woman dramatically lit from the left, posing on a balcony. Her dress is characteristic of the late nineteenth century, with its lowered waistline and pleated skirt that recall contemporary portraits by the American painter John Singer Sargent (1856–1925). The care with which Lynch has portrayed the silk dress and the long satin gloves underscores the importance of sartorial splendor to the artist and undoubtedly would have resonated with his targeted affluent audience. Adding to the allure of the painting is the woman's cool and aloof demeanor and the gentle way she rests her gloved left hand on the balcony's rail. Moreover, there is a certain mysterious element in the way the woman hides her right hand behind her back, as though she is holding something she does not want us to see. Lynch further accentuates this unknown quality through the inclusion of the open door that perhaps leads to the lady's private chamber and the ambiguous moonlit background.

While in recent years the painting has been entitled *A Woman of 1900*, a more appropriate title is *Portrait by Gaslight*, which was the title given to the painting when it was first bought by Clark in 1928. In fact, the play of the slightly orange light on the figure and her fancy clothes is one of the most compelling aspects of this picture. The reason for the change of title to *A Woman of 1900* is undocumented and was likely



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an informal name that Clark used for the picture that later became institutionalized. It is unknown what title Lynch originally gave the painting.

Portrait by Gaslight is the single example of Lynch's work that Sterling Clark owned, and he was most likely first drawn to the painting by Lynch's smooth painterly style, which is reminiscent of Lynch's contemporaries Alfred Stevens (cats. 314–25) and Giovanni Boldini

(cats. 21-27), whose work Clark also admired. It is likely that Clark, who spent hours discussing clothing with his wife's milliner and whose diaries are filled with references to fashion, was also intrigued by Lynch's handling of the woman's dress.¹ In the end, however, it seems that the deciding factor leading Clark to purchase the painting was the pleasure he took in acquiring a beautiful painting at a bargain price. Throughout his diary entries in February 1928 there are repeated references to his amazement that he bought such a fine picture for only forty dollars. He seemed to take particular pleasure in showing it off to the dealer George Davey and noting that a similar painting by Carolus-Duran, albeit less masterful in Clark's eyes, had a price tag of three hundred fifty dollars.² Even as Clark's collection continued to grow, he still valued this painting, as suggested by a restoration bill for Portrait by Gaslight dated 25 October 1939, eleven years after its purchase. It was most likely on display in one of his residences, perhaps in the Upperville, Virginia, estate to which the 1939 bill was addressed. DC

PROVENANCE Sale, American Art Association, New York, 2 Feb. 1928, no. 7, as *Portrait by Gaslight*, sold to Knoedler; [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 11 Feb. 1928]; Robert Sterling Clark (1928–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1982a, no. 13, ill., as *A Girl of* 1900.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine-weave linen (approximately 25 threads/cm), on its original five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The bleached, double-weave linen and glue lining was done by Beers Brothers in 1939. The picture was cleaned in 1982, when the flower on the woman's shoulder was revealed. The paint layer is inordinately thick, and a general lumpiness of the paint and multiple colors seen through the cracks and along the edges suggest the possibility of paint layers and perhaps an earlier image below the visible surface. Tests along the top edge in the sky indicate the presence of at least one lower color. There are traction cracks in the trees, and wrinkling paint and wandering age cracks are scattered throughout the surface. Old losses in the upper part of the bodice are now inpainted. Other recent retouches include the background to the right of the figure's head, the upper lip of the face, and one area of the trees. The ultraviolet light fluorescence of old varnish residues is patchy, with heavier deposits across the bottom edge. The trees in the right background are matte, and some wrinkling, underlying brushstrokes, and traction cracks are also more visible in reflected light.

The off-white ground is probably a commercially applied layer. The canvas texture is obscured by the ground, and possibly by additional paint layers below the upper image. Graphite underdrawing can be seen in the architectural elements and the gloves of the hand on the balustrade. A brown or black paint sketch can be seen below some areas, forming such details as the nose and eyes. In infrared reflectography, drawing changes can be seen in the hand on the balustrade, and on the width of the skirt on both sides. The paint has a paste consistency throughout the surface. It is possible the proper right arm was originally in a straighter position, though still placed behind the figure. There seem to be old adjustments to the line of the bodice, and there may still be a flower buried under old repaint on the other shoulder.

 See for example RSC Diary, 8 Jan. 1929. Indeed, his love of fashion was so pronounced that one of the few times he agreed to lend his artwork to an exhibition was Wildenstein's 1943 Fashion in Headdress. The paintings he loaned were Barbour's Woman Reading (cat. 8), Jan van Beers's Woman in Evening Dress (cat. 11), and Jules-Adolphe Goupil's Woman Seated (cat. 158).

2. RSC Diary, 3-4, 6, and 19, Feb. 1928.

Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta

Spanish, 1841–1920

198 | Confidences (The Morning Visit) c. 1870

Oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm Lower left: R. Madrazo 1955.798

In the intimacy of a room, a woman is sitting on a chair and finishing getting dressed as she receives the visit of another young woman. The visitor is wearing a two-piece ensemble consisting of a long skirt and a long-sleeved jacket. Under an elaborate mirror, which reflects a pair of curtains, is a narrow mantelpiece on which a number of objects are placed, including a porcelain vase and a porcelain and silver gilt candlestick. Closer to the corner of the chamber is an opened upright secretary topped with a small vase of flowers. An oval painting of a female nude hangs on the wall above the cabinet.

For the past century, this work has been fully attributed to Raimundo de Madrazo as there are elements that are typical of the artist's work, including the fine modeling of the hands of the half-dressed woman