



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

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1. Reproduced in Angers 2004–5, p. 19.
2. Reproduced in Angers 2004–5, p. 29.
3. Guillaume Bodinier to Victor Bodinier, 12 Apr. 1830, in Angers 2004–5, p. 23: “Naples est un bien beau pays, vraiment plus beau que Rome et bien moins connu, et plus pittoresque encore par ses habitants.”
4. Angers 2004–5, p. 61.
5. The Bodinier bequest to the Musée des Beaux-Arts d’Angers consists of over 1,000 objects, some of which might relate to this painting and give clues to its location. Several paintings and drawings of Italian landscapes are reproduced in Rome–New York 2003, pp. 290–97, but the rest, and particularly reproductions of them, remain largely unpublished.
6. The drawings are all in the Musée des Beaux-Arts d’Angers. The painting was on the art market and is reproduced in Paris 1990, no. 6.
7. Guillaume Bodinier to Hippolyte Jubin, 22 Sept. 1832, in Angers 2004–5, p. 11: “Si un heureux hasard te guidait sur la côte d’Italie, ce serait un grand honneur de te voir. Il faut pour cela que je te donne mon adresse.”
8. Port 1990, p. 316. The Boguet paintings were on the art market with Stoppenbach & Delestre, reproduced in London 1986, no. 2, *Vue du lac de Nemi*, and no. 3, *Vue de Frascati*. No further information on Théodore Jubin is given.
9. This sale is listed in the entry under Bodinier in Bénézit 2006, vol. 2, p. 689. No public sale in Angers or in Paris is known on this date, so it may have been a private sale.
10. There is no invoice from the dealer in the file. The painting arrived at the Clark for purchase consideration on 3 May 1985.

Louis-Léopold Boilly

French, 1761–1845

18 | Various Objects c. 1785

Oil on canvas, 72.4 x 60.3 cm

Upper left: f. Boilly

1981.1

Born in La Bassée near Lille, Louis-Léopold Boilly moved to Arras at an early age and was apprenticed there to the painter Dominique Doncre (1743–1820). By 1785, he had settled in Paris, and a few years later, in 1791, he began exhibiting regularly at the Salon. His early reputation was based on highly finished small pictures representing scenes of courtship and aristo-

cratic dalliance. With their smooth, refined surfaces and engaging attention to detail, these works demonstrate his admiration for the seventeenth-century Dutch masters. The invariably erotic undertone of many of these pictures fell out of favor during the Revolution of 1789, and Boilly was at one point threatened with imprisonment by the Committee on Public Safety; he allegedly responded by painting a work on a patriotic theme, *The Triumph of Marat* (1794; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille). In the post-Revolutionary period, he continued to paint genre scenes that were less overtly erotic but still focused on fashionable society and the street theater of Parisian life during the Directory and Empire. He was also a master of trompe l’oeil painting and a prolific portraitist, developing a format for small-scale bust-length portraits that he was said to be able to finish in two hours.¹

The Clark painting represents one of Boilly’s earliest known examples of a trompe l’oeil, a type of painting he likely discovered during his early years in La Bassée, when he was influenced by, but not yet a student of, Doncre, an occasional practitioner of the genre. John Hallam believed that the composition and the “letter rack” motif exhibit enough similarities to Doncre’s work that it should be dated to Boilly’s period in Arras (1780–85); most scholars, however, now believe it was made shortly after the artist moved to Paris in 1785.² Given that Boilly did not employ the term *trompe l’oeil* (a phrase he himself appears to have invented) before 1800,³ the title used by HARRISSE in his catalogue raisonné, *Divers Objets* (various objects), is maintained here.⁴ It adequately describes the range of seemingly disparate objects suspended on a wall. In the lower register, a row of seven folded letters and a sprig of pansies are held in place by a piece of string stretched between two nails. The space above is filled with a variety of objects of different textures and shapes, including an open pocketknife; a pair of scissors; a set of calipers; a glass flask half-filled with liquid, hanging from a string; a leather pouch; and a wrinkled engraving of two drinkers, inscribed with the name D[avid] Teniers. Boilly signed the painting “[f]ecit. Boilly” (“Boilly made this”) on a cartouche stuck with a piece of wax to the wall at the upper left.

Why Boilly should have combined these particular objects in this way is open to interpretation. Several of the letters are addressed to a Monsieur and Madame Dandré in Arras, about whom nothing is known. Together with the sprig of pansies (*pensées* or “thoughts” in French), this might indicate that the



painting was made as a tribute to the Dandrés, who may have been friends of the artist.⁵ Yet as Susan Siegfried has pointed out, this idea hardly accounts for the other objects so tantalizingly re-created by Boilly.⁶ 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.⁷ 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;⁸ 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,