



**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,
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Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications
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Index by Kathleen M. Friello
Proofread by June Cuffner
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Jean-Charles Cazin

French, 1841–1901

47 | **Mist on the River** c. 1889

Oil on canvas, 54.6 x 65.5 cm

Lower left: J. C. Cazin

1955.1026

Mist rises from a quiet river, obscuring the buildings strung along the far bank and the poplars behind a parapet to the left. Water lilies form an indefinite shape in the lower right. The sun, surrounded by a roseate aura, is a faintly brighter spot in the sky. Nothing in this painting by Jean-Charles Cazin is distinct.

A little-known artist now, Cazin was highly esteemed during his lifetime, although he largely absented himself from the day-to-day workings of the art world of

Paris. Unusual among French artists, Cazin spoke fluent English, the result of time spent in England probably in the early 1860s to improve his health and again from 1871 to 1874. Also unusual was Cazin's activity in several media: he was both a painter and a ceramist.

Crucial to Cazin's development were the teachings of Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran (1802–1897) at the *École Gratuite de Dessin* (also called the *Petite École*), whose goal was to enable students to draw and paint from memory.¹ Such a method relied on careful and accurate observation, whether of figures, indoors or out, interiors, or landscapes, with all the permutations and fluctuations that characterize outdoor phenomena. These sites and sensations, remembered in the studio, necessarily are marked by a sense of remove.

Cazin settled in Equihen, near Boulogne, when he returned to France in 1875. In this, he was like other landscapists who lived close to the subjects they painted—Théodore Rousseau and Jean-François

Millet in Barbizon, Jules Dupré in L'Île-Adam, Charles-François Daubigny in Auvers. For a time Cazin painted biblical stories set in the contemporary French countryside. Pictures such as *Hagar and Ishmael* (1880; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours) and *Tobias and the Angel* (one version 1878; The Art Institute of Chicago) were appreciated by critics and public alike. Soon, however, Cazin left out the historicizing figures, and, after the mid-1880s, he painted landscapes with no narrative gloss, concentrating instead on evocative and ephemeral atmosphere in locales near his home.

Cazin's interest in subdued light effects was noticed early on. In 1890, the American critic Theodore Child praised Cazin's landscapes for "the absolute verity of the light, the quality of atmosphere and ambience. In the exquisite study of the phenomena of light and shade, and more especially in the endeavor to render diffused light, M. Cazin is peculiarly modern." Child saw in a "modern picture a photometric quality which leads us to conclude that the modern eye is sensitive to many things which our fathers did not perceive."² What is modern about Cazin's paintings is not so much the specific atmospheric effect of light softened by mist as the flattened pattern and matte colors that such a diffused light produces. In this his work shares common ground with that of both Camille Corot and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, whose paintings also tend toward the cooler, grayer colors. As an astute contemporary explained, Cazin's "color-schemes are invariably quiet and reserved; and though contrasts and the counterplay exist, they are so subdued as not to attract attention to themselves. They are effective in the best sense of the word, because they make themselves felt only in the ensemble."³

Mist on the River is an unusual example of Cazin's art in that it does not include a human figure or a human surrogate, such as a house or even a road with the promise of a house at its end, with which the viewer can identify. In this instance, the buildings on the far bank of the river are too distant—and too indistinct—to evoke any feelings of attraction, and the stand of poplars is inaccessible behind the elevated embankment. Although the canvas is not dated, it is likely that Cazin painted it about 1889, when he made a similar, dated work that includes poplars behind a wall and water lilies on still water. When the dated painting sold in 1944 from the estate of Potter Palmer, it was said to be a view of the Castle of Kronborg at Elsinore, in Denmark.⁴ Not only did Cazin never go to Denmark, but the castle walls of Kronborg do not

plunge into water, as they do in Palmer's picture. The misidentification highlights the fact that *Mist on the River* does not resemble Cazin's other landscapes of the countryside in Picardie around Equihen of gently rolling hills and dunes, prompting the cataloguer to flights of fancy.

Cazin must have seen this river with a hamlet on one bank and the wall of what is probably a private park or estate on the other. Having committed it to memory, in the studio he sketched light lines to demarcate the water at the right, around the trees and wall at the left, and around the buildings on the far bank and the bank itself. This was his common practice.⁵ The matte surface is attributable to the dry paint that lies on the tops of the threads of the canvas, a technique that is especially effective in evoking mist. As a depiction of a place remembered and not painted on the spot, *Mist on the River* produces a sense of reverie and nostalgia, much like the landscapes of Corot, similarly inspired by a locale seen in the past and called up in the studio. "Like Corot," opined Child, "M. Cazin is always full of soul; in unheroic and even familiar subjects he gives us the impression of a thoughtful, serious, and yet hopeful nature."⁶ FEW

PROVENANCE Mrs. M. Dougherty, New York; [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 31 Jan. 1946]; Robert Sterling Clark (1946–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is moderate-weight linen (approximately 22 threads/cm), in either a twill weave or a tabby with a diagonal appearance. The picture was wax-resin lined in 1975 by Roland Cunningham of Hartford, due to a small tear in the right sky. The secondary fabric is coarse linen (13 threads/cm) over a replacement expansion-bolt stretcher. The artist's tacking margins were removed, although part of the upper edge may now be incorporated into the image. There is old frame abrasion in the lower right corner. The scattered age cracks and the old center vertical stretcher creases are slightly lifted. Most of the previous natural resin varnish was removed in 1975, with a thin layer remaining over the very wispy, dry-brushed signature. The only other feature visible in ultraviolet light is retouching in the small tear, which in normal lighting is paler than the surrounding sky. The present surface is very matte, with a dry, sprayed surface reflectance.

The ground is comprised of several grayish white commercial layers, applied thinly enough to expose the canvas weave. Light underdrawing lines, possibly in graphite, can

be seen in the pale water at the right center. Using infrared reflectography, additional lines can be detected around the left trees and wall, the distant buildings, and the water's edge. A dark line running up the left edge may indicate that the picture was marked prior to stretching. The thin scumbles of paint skip across the threads, and the ground color shows through in many locations, especially in a broad area in the right center river. The fog at the left was made by dragging very dry whitish paint over previously painted trees. The tree tops were then repainted with a darker color. The thickest paint was used to indicate the sun. The entire surface was executed in coarse bristle brushes, which have left their marks in the paint.

1. For a brief, accessible discussion of Lecoq de Boisbaudran's teachings, see Cleveland and others 1980–82, p. 34.
2. Child 1890, p. 826.
3. Coffin 1898, p. 395.
4. Sale, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, 16 Mar. 1944, no. 84.
5. Bénédite 1901, pp. 99–100.
6. Child 1890, p. 828.

Théobald Chartran

French, 1849–1907

48 | Emma Calvé as Carmen 1894

Oil on canvas, 116.4 x 90.2 cm
 Lower right: Chartran / 1894
 1955.41

Emma Calvé (1858–1942) was a French soprano, famous in her day throughout Europe and America for her performances in the operas of Georges Bizet and Jules Massenet. Born in France to a French mother and a Spanish father, Calvé spent some years in Spain as a child, making her an ideal performer to take on the role of the feisty Spanish cigarette-factory worker in Bizet's *Carmen*. Although the role of Carmen was initially established by Célestine Galli-Marié in the inaugural performance of the opera in Paris in 1875, Calvé strived to make it her own when she first sang the role in 1892 at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. In her autobiography, Calvé gives herself credit for making changes in the costume, dance steps, and gestures from those used by Galli-Marié, basing her version upon a first-hand study of the gypsies of Grenada and her own

differences in personality and body type with those of her predecessor.¹ In 1893 *Carmen* was performed to much acclaim in London and then in New York, bringing great fame to Calvé. She later asserted that *Carmen* was not her favorite role, but one to which she had become a prisoner due to its popularity.² In 1904 she took part in the one-thousandth performance of *Carmen* at the Opéra-Comique, and she continued to sing well into the 1920s.

In the painting of the singer in her most famous role, Calvé, with a tilt of her head and her arms akimbo, emphasizes the forthright temperament of her character. She smiles beguilingly at the viewer, as if inviting an encounter. Equally dramatic is the vivid contrast between the singer's dark hair and creamy skin. Publicity photographs of Calvé as *Carmen* (fig. 48.1) indicate a similar theatricality and sauciness of character, while also showing the details of her costume. The singer wears a fringed shawl decorated with flowers at the décolletage and waistline, with more flowers tucked into her upswept hairdo. Many of these costume elements are carried over to the painting. The shawl is the most prominent element of Calvé's costume, but it is the fringe that seems of major interest to the painter, Théobald Chartran. He gives the fringe almost a life of its own with an implied movement of each strand.

Chartran trained with the academic painter Alexandre Cabanel (1823–1889) and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, exhibited at the Salon beginning in 1872, and was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1877. Although he is little known today, his popularity rose in the late 1870s and early 1880s because of his illustrations of his contemporaries—including Pope Leo XIII and Victor Hugo—that he executed for the English periodical *Vanity Fair*. Typically signed with a single “T,” these illustrations often evoke a timeless elegance; rarely could they be classified as caricatures. Chartran's works in oil ranged from history and religious paintings to landscapes and portraits. Not surprisingly, given his background in portrait illustration, it was the latter at which he excelled, so much so that by 1893, one critic classified Chartran as of the first rank of serious portraitists of the day.³ By 1902, he was prominent enough to be commissioned to paint official portraits of President Theodore Roosevelt and his wife, Edith Carow Roosevelt. Unfortunately, the president was so displeased by his portrait, supposedly on account of its lack of masculinity, that he reportedly asked for it to be destroyed and replaced by a portrait by John Singer Sargent, an artist more suited to the president's own