



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME TWO

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,
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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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Details:

TITLE PAGE: Camille Pissarro, *The Louvre from the Pont Neuf* (cat. 253)

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PRECEDING PAGE 474: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Onions* (cat. 280)

PAGES 890–91: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphisa* (cat. 3)

edges have chamfers 3.2 cm wide. Small chunks of wood are missing along the top edge and in the lower and upper right corners. When the painting was cleaned of a thick natural resin layer in 1987, it was noted that an earlier cleaning had eroded the dark-shaded buildings, tree foliage, cobblestones, and the signature. It is likely that the painting was cleaned by a dealer before the 1946 purchase. In general, this picture has suffered more solvent abrasion than the companion street scene, some of which is still evident. Clear inclusions, perhaps paint components, have been exposed by overcleaning in the thin dark foliage. There are fine aperture cracks in the sky and in the white details, suggesting that something about the white paint may have precipitated this condition. Brown streaks in the sky following the panel's grain are the result of wood tannins migrating into the ground layer. In ultraviolet light, new inpainting can be seen scattered in the sky, on the distant church tower, and along the top edge. In reflected light, the coating has a slightly sprayed appearance.

The ground is composed of several off-white commercially primed layers. There may be faint graphite or charcoal underdrawing lines, seen in low magnification in areas of exposed ground at the intersections of forms. No lines were seen with infrared reflectography. This paint layer was created using the same paint buildup and possible black ink-work details as in the companion scene. A speckled mixture of white, gritty material is seen in the dark green and dark brown trees. The texture of this ingredient has been enhanced by cleaning which has leached away the surrounding paint medium. The signature "CSpringer" may have been executed in brown ink.

1. Clark, for instance, bought the paintings as views of Amsterdam streets. Labels on the backs of the panels, however, show that at one time the pictures were identified with Rotterdam. The first person to point out definitively that the Clark paintings are composites of various elements of Dutch townscapes was Ms. Tellegow, the assistant librarian of the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague. Her analysis is in the Clark's curatorial files and is dated 7 May 1975.
2. For example, see his 1877 *The Delfland Gemeenschapshuis and the Old Church of Delft in Summer*, reproduced as no. 77-2 in Laanstra et al. 1984, p. 193.
3. Robert Sterling Clark to Paul Lewis Clemens, 2 Feb. 1946, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute Archives, Williamstown.

Philip Wilson Steer

English, 1860–1942

312 | Sunset 1913

Oil on canvas, 61 x 81.7 cm

Lower right: P W Steer 1913

1955.36

The fiery pink of the setting sun, the purples of the wispy clouds, and the dramatic reflections of the sky setting ablaze the sea of Harwich Harbor typify Philip Wilson Steer's mastery of color and paint. Bruce Laughton calls *Sunset* a "minor masterpiece, a shot fired for the old guard: a bleached and glazed Turnerian sky; Whistlerian harbour lights; broken water surface like early Monet."¹ Although Steer is considered a leading figure in the British response to French Impressionism, his landscapes and seascapes are most often identified with the English tradition of J. M. W. Turner and John Constable. Interpreters of his work have placed varying weights on Steer's dual inheritance, often ignoring his French training and privileging the native roots as in the London Times' obituary, which states that his work is "sturdily and traditionally English."²

Having abandoned a civil service career, Steer had his first instruction in art at the Gloucester School of Art and subsequently at the South Kensington Drawing Schools. His earliest exposure to the art world, however, was from his father, Philip Steer, who was a painter. The younger Steer, rejected by the Royal Academy Schools, studied in Paris first with William-Adolphe Bouguereau at the Académie Julian and then with Alexandre Cabanel at the École des Beaux-Arts from January 1883. His work shows the first indications of Impressionist techniques in 1884, the year of his return to London and the same year that he began his annual summer trips away from the capital. Coastal towns in England and France, such as Walberswick (1884; 1888), Étaples (1887), Boulogne (1891; 1894), Montreuil-sur-Mer (1889; 1907), and Cowes (1892) provided him with sources for his drawings and paintings.³

Steer's views of Harwich date from two periods of his mature career. The Clark's painting belongs to the group of works he did between 1913 and 1914.⁴ In his works dating from the late 1920s and early 1930s, he employed his then-favorite medium of watercolor. Steer's alliance with the avant-garde stream of early



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twentieth-century British painting is epitomized by his role in the establishment and support of the New English Art Club, which was founded in 1886 as the Society of Anglo-French Painters. There is no doubt, therefore, that he would have been well aware of the Post-Impressionists represented in Roger Fry's two seminal exhibitions on view in London in 1910–11 and 1912.⁵

While the bold palette and masterful brushwork of *Sunset*—its juxtaposition of a smoothly painted sky punctuated by the harbor lights that divide it from the choppy, thick strokes of the water—point to his familiarity with French trends, his choice of location and composition evoke Turner. Steer's low horizon line, sparkling lights, allée of masts, and elegant rigging and sails recall Turner's own treatment of Harwich in works such as *Snow Storm, Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842; Tate Britain, London).⁶ EP

PROVENANCE Eleanor Van de Weyer Brett, Viscountess Esher, London (before Apr. 1935);⁷ [Barbizon House, London, probably by Apr. 1935, sold to Clark, 20 Feb. 1936, as *Sunset at Harwich*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1936–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS London 1913b, no. 18; probably London 1935a, no cat.; Williamstown 1955, no. 36, pl. 23; Williamstown 1958b, pl. 68; Williamstown 1988a, no cat.

REFERENCES Thomson 1936, p. 14, no. 23, ill., as *Harwich at Sunset*; MacColl and Yockney 1945, p. 214, as *Sunset (Harwich)*; Laughton 1971, pp. 103, 151, no. 487, fig. 197, as *Sunset, Harwich Harbour*; Johnson 1975, p. 608.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined moderate-weight linen (19 threads/cm), with excess fabric folded around to the back of the original four-member stretcher. There is a round canvas stamp on the reverse for Newman, London, and a canvas draw in the lower left corner. Traction cracks appear in some of the thicker paint. Some frame abrasion is visible, and bits of wood are stuck in the surface near the lower edge. The scattered cracks on the right side probably come from handling the picture by the stretcher. Large thumbtack impressions and holes are found in each corner and the centers of the top and bottom edges. It is possible that the picture was painted while pinned to a board or carried in a painter's box equipped with pins to separate wet paintings. The original varnish was unevenly applied and is still visible in ultraviolet light; it was only partially removed due to reported solvent sensitivities in the darker colors. The present patches of yellow varnish, seen in squared-off rem-

nants in the sky, are shinier in reflected light, which suggests that they are residues of the old natural resin varnish.

The ground is a commercially prepared off-white layer. No underdrawing was found. The water and sky zones were done using very different techniques, with paint in the sky apparently extended by brushing out the strokes with a clean dry brush. The lower third of the picture was made with thick vehicular paint. The paint in the foreground is several layers deep, with all the lower colors showing through skips in the upper layers. Some subtractive tool was used in the foreground, possibly a palette knife, which scraped through the paint exposing the lower paint and ground layers. The ship masts were applied after the paint in the sky and the water had hardened.

1. Laughton 1971, p. 103.
2. *Times* 1942, p. 6.
3. The chronological list of places Steer painted is among his papers held by the Courtauld Institute and published by D. S. MacColl as Appendix G in MacColl and Yockney 1945, p. 186.
4. Other paintings of Harwich from 1913–14 with similar dimensions are *Misty Evening, Harwich* (Manchester City Art Gallery) and *Sunset, Harwich Harbour* (Blackwell Family Collection). For the complete list, see MacColl and Yockney 1945, pp. 214–15.
5. London 1910–11 and London 1912.
6. Kenneth McConkey addresses the influence of Constable and Turner on Steer as well as on other English Impressionists, dating the emergence of English Impressionism to the 1890s in London–Dublin 1995, pp. 55–56, 82.
7. Viscountess Esher, d. 1940, was the wife of Reginald Baliol Brett, second Viscount Esher (1852–1930).

Adolphe-Charles-Édouard Steinheil

French, 1850–1908

313 | The Bibliophile c. 1890

Oil on panel, 24.8 x 16.5 cm

Lower right: A. STEINHEIL

1955.859

This painting previously carried an attribution to Louis-Charles-Auguste Steinheil (1814–1865) but is instead by his son and pupil.¹ Both father and son worked in a similar style, derived from that of Ernest Meissonier (cats. 211–13), the well-known history and genre painter. In fact, Meissonier married Louis

Steinheil's sister Emma, and the two painters spent their early careers working together.² In addition to paintings, Louis Steinheil created book illustrations and stained-glass designs, and helped restore the stained glass at the cathedrals in Paris, Strasbourg, and Bourges.

Like his father and uncle, Adolphe Steinheil had varied antiquarian interests that carried over to his artistic output. Many of his paintings show the world of courtiers and cavaliers garbed in costumes of earlier eras, such as *The Connoisseurs* (private collection), wherein three stylish seventeenth-century gentlemen examine a drawing within a well-appointed salon.³ When the younger Steinheil did execute history paintings, they were not drawn from recent military history, as were Meissonier's Napoleonic battlefield scenes, but derived from an earlier age, as in the *Death of Richard the Lionheart* (Salon of 1881; location unknown).⁴ Steinheil exhibited his works at the Salon in Paris regularly during the 1880s and 1890s, and received a bronze medal at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. He also dabbled in portraiture and Orientalist subjects.

In this tiny painting, a scholar sits before a table with ornately carved wooden legs, transcribing, or perhaps translating, from a sheet of paper. He is bearded, and wears a long black robe with a white collar. Numerous books line the shelves behind him, and a large tome is propped open before him on the table. The scholar, as he seems to be, sits near a window since some light penetrates the otherwise dark study. The overall feeling of the picture is one of quietude, peacefulness, and timelessness, for the era depicted is not readily apparent, either by costume or decor. It is not possible to assign a date to this painting, but it is likely from the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The painting's subject, style, and even its scale are derived from the work of Meissonier, such as his *Painter Showing His Drawings* (1850; Wallace Collection, London) or *Man Reading* of 1851 (cat. 211).

Steinheil met an untimely death in 1908, when he and his wife's stepmother were asphyxiated to death at the family's home in Paris. Marguerite, his young wife, found alive but gagged and bound to her bed, claimed that burglars were responsible for the crimes. She was ultimately charged with the murders, but acquitted after a scandalous trial that exposed her many sexual liaisons, including an affair years earlier with none other than Félix Faure, president of France.⁵ Soon after the sensational trial, Adolphe Steinheil's