



**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

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.



The Getty Foundation



Produced by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267
www.clarkart.edu

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Production by The Production Department,
Whately, Massachusetts
Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

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Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040
www.yalebooks.com/art

Printed and bound in Italy
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

Nineteenth-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / 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. Rogl an, James Rosenow, Zo  Samels, Fronia E. Wissman.

volumes cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-935998-09-9 (clark hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-300-17965-1 (yale hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Painting, European—19th century—Catalogs. 2. Painting—Massachusetts—Williamstown—Catalogs. 3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—Catalogs. I. Lees, Sarah, editor of compilation. II. Rand, Richard. III. Webber, Sandra L. IV. Title. V. Title: 19th-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

ND457.S74 2012

759.9409'0340747441—dc23

2012030510

Details:

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

OPPOSITE COPYRIGHT PAGE: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril* (cat. 331)

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

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

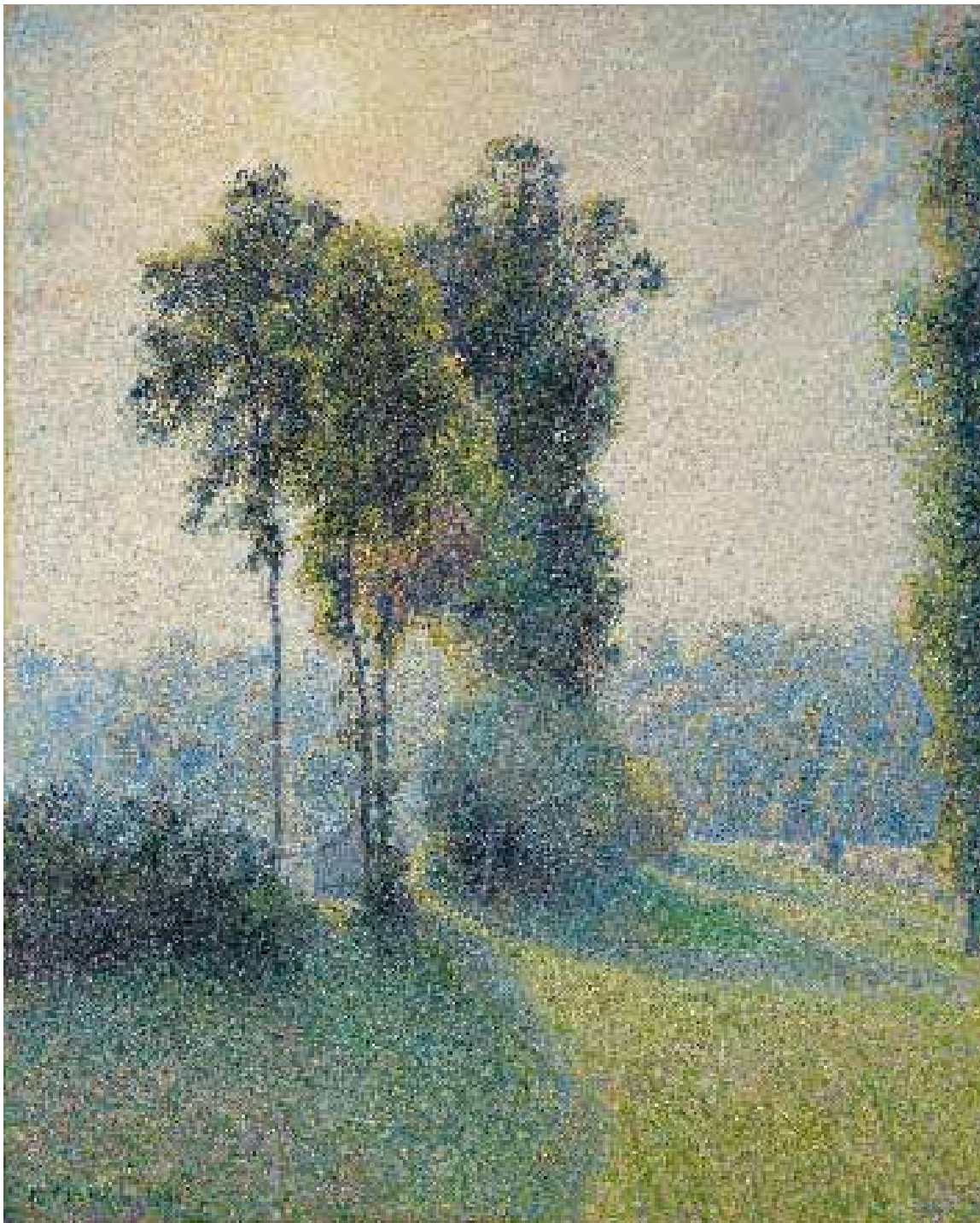
12. See Technical Report. Certain violet pigments are known to be fugitive.
13. See, among many examples, W 311, 347, 357, 511, 613, and 628.
14. The black and yellow carriage in the center distance was clearly introduced after a similar form had been obliterated slightly to its left.
15. L 368.
16. See the chronologies of the artist's life in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 1, pp. 28–37. He is listed at 108 Boulevard Rochechouart in 1866 and 1868.
17. PDR 619.
18. PDR 618.
19. Cassatt's apartment was on the rue Trudaine, immediately south of the Boulevard Rochechouart, while Degas spent most of his life in apartments and studios within a few streets of this spot.
20. L 522.
21. B 100.
22. W 469.
23. Another work that may have informed Pissarro's composition was Guillaumin's *Quai de la gare, Snow Effect*, now in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, which presents a central perspective, numerous pedestrians and carriages, and a receding line of buildings at right, all bathed in a warm, wintry light. Though executed about 1874, it was shown in the 1880 Impressionist exhibition.
24. The site and much of the view is still identifiable, though the building from which Pissarro worked has been replaced by a modern structure.
25. It is clear that on this occasion the artist made the unexpected decision to represent just a small part of his visual field. As if using binoculars or opera glasses, he effectively "zoomed in" on the cluster of trees, pedestrians, and omnibuses that were, in fact, at a considerable distance from him.
26. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 5 July 1883; translation from Lloyd and Pissarro 1997, p. 26.
27. Lloyd and Pissarro 1997, p. 27.
28. Provenance given in letter from Durand-Ruel, 4 Apr. 2005. See the Clark's curatorial file.
29. Information on 1883 and 1903 exhibitions from letter from Durand-Ruel, 4 Apr. 2005. See the Clark's curatorial file.

251 | Landscape at Saint-Charles, near Gisors, Sunset 1891

Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm
 Lower left: C. Pissarro. 1891
 1955-524

The final phase of Pissarro's withdrawal from Neo-Impressionism, after several productive and sometimes acrimonious years of involvement with the movement, is well exemplified in *Landscape at Saint-Charles*. After meeting Paul Signac and Georges Seurat in 1885, he discovered that they shared a fascination with the effects of juxtaposed colors, such as that already expressed in his *Artist's Palette* (cat. 249). Pissarro soon refined his techniques toward the more systematic approaches of his new friends, leaving behind the Impressionist stroke in favor of the Pointillist dot, and revised his palette according to stricter criteria. Their aim, he explained to the skeptical dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in 1886, was "to seek a modern synthesis of methods based on science, that is, based on M. Chevreul's theory of color and on the experiments of Maxwell and the measurements of N. O. Rood. To substitute optical mixture for mixture of pigments. In other words: the breaking up of tones into their constituents. For optical mixture stirs up more intense luminosities than does mixture of pigments."¹

By the spring of 1886, when Seurat unveiled his controversial mural-sized *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (The Art Institute of Chicago) at the eighth Impressionist exhibition, Pissarro was able to display a number of ambitious canvases in his own variant of the novel procedure.² Many former colleagues were shocked by this apparent act of desertion, and Pissarro found it necessary to defend himself and, on occasion, to confront his adversaries. In 1887, his faith seemed to be still unshaken and he could say of the critic Joris-Karl Huysmans, "In a few years he will adore the dot!"³ His patrons remained unconvinced, however, and Pissarro's long-standing difficulties in selling work were further exacerbated by this latest, seemingly incomprehensible, shift in style. Now based in the distant rural town of Éragny-sur-Epte, where living was cheaper, he struggled with real financial hardship and also with his conflicted enthusiasms. A letter of September 1888 shows that Pissarro was beginning to waver: "How can one combine the purity and simplicity of the dot with the fullness, suppleness, liberty,



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spontaneity and freshness of sensation postulated by our Impressionist art?" he asked his son Lucien.⁴

It was this search for a theoretical and practical middle ground that preoccupied Pissarro as the decade ended, and which ultimately led to the more improvised luminosity of *Landscape at Saint-Charles* in 1891. Countryside scenes continued to stimulate the "freshness of sensation" that had inspired his art from the beginning and now appeared to give it a new impetus. In December 1890, he told Lucien about some new pictures that were under way, with "more liberty, more air than my previous works. I am completely satisfied

with them."⁵ The same correspondence also documents a practical concern that dogged this period, hindering Pissarro's ability to work outdoors as he had previously done. An inflamed tear gland required occasional medical treatment and eventually resulted in a minor operation, confining him to painting from the windows of his house for months on end.⁶ For all its effect of intense actuality, therefore, *Landscape at Saint-Charles* is probably a fusion of occasional direct perceptions of the landscape and extended labor in the studio. The rich foliage in the picture indicates that it was made in the summer or early fall of 1891,

a period when Pissarro excitedly described the emergence of several paintings close to the size of the Clark picture. Explaining that one of them was almost finished, he continued, "It is not executed in 'dots,' which I have completely abandoned in order to accomplish the division of pure tones without having to wait for the paint to dry; this last had the disadvantage of weakening the sensation."⁷

A close study of *Landscape at Saint-Charles* reveals its deliberated, transitional character. In place of Poin-tillist dots, Pissarro used a range of varied, small-scale touches with a fine brush, including dabs, flicks, and angled strokes that create a weave- or knit-like continuity across the surface. Many of these marks have been added with care to previous applications of paint, resulting in a dense crust of color that mingles the lower layers with progressive accumulations of hue and with the artist's final flourishes. The local consequences can be dazzling, if no longer strictly "based on science," with brilliant pink and peach tones vibrating against blues and greens at lower left, for example, and deep purples and near-blacks in the shadows contrasting with the lemon incandescence in nearby passages of sky. So vivid are these qualities that, optically speaking, parts of the composition appear to advance or recede, bending the space and apparently challenging the flatness of the canvas. In structural terms, the unusual "half-tree" at right both adds to this spatial energy and partly contains it, as if Pissarro felt the need to anchor his palpitating scene to the surrounding frame.⁸ The combination of a freely modified "dot" with the "fullness, suppleness, liberty" of a revived Impressionism seems almost excessive in its richness, contrasting with the rigors of his former regime and with the relative restraint of plein air practice. Such a pitch of intensity was rarely attempted by Pissarro again, as if he realized that a limit had been reached.

Though not unprecedented, Pissarro's decision to reduce the human component of *Landscape at Saint-Charles* to a single distant shepherd with his flock allowed him to concentrate on a landscape suffused with colored light. Letters written from Éragny spoke of the beauty of the surrounding country and his sense of "ecstasy" as he worked on such paintings.⁹ The rhapsodic qualities of such works, now less compromised by overt theoretical concerns or by the political issues that continued to preoccupy him, seem to have reawakened the enthusiasm of his followers. In September 1891, he sold *Landscape at Saint-Charles* to Paul

Durand-Ruel, a sign that the two men had overcome their disagreements of the Neo-Impressionist years.¹⁰ On a trip to Paris in December 1891, Pissarro then discovered that several of his pictures had been recently bought at auction by Bernheim-Jeune and that other dealers were seeking him out.¹¹ Within a short time, Pissarro agreed to prepare a retrospective exhibition for the Durand-Ruel gallery, which took place in early 1892. As Bernheim told him, "Your moment has come!"¹² RK

PROVENANCE The artist, sold to Durand-Ruel, Paris, 12 Sept. 1891; [Durand-Ruel, Paris and New York, 1891–1933, sold to Clark 11 Feb. 1933, as *Paysage, St. Charles*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1933–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Paris 1892a, no. 43, as *Paysage, à Saint-Charles, près Gisors; soleil couchant*;¹³ Paris 1899, no. 54, as *Paysage, à Saint-Charles; soleil couchant*; Paris 1904a, no. 80, as *Paysage à Saint-Charles*, lent by Durand-Ruel; Paris 1910, no. 9; Williamstown 1956a, no. 123, pl. 60, as *Paysage à Saint-Charles, soleil couchant*; New York 1933a, no. 4, as *Paysage St. Charles*; New York 1967, no. 29, as *St. Charles, Éragny, At Sunset*; Williamstown 1981a, no cat.; Birmingham–Glasgow 1990, pp. 79, 125, no. 58, fig. 97, and ill. on back cover, as *St. Charles, Éragny, Sunset*; Williamstown 1990c, no cat.

REFERENCES Wulff 1892, p. 3; *Intransigent* 1892, p. 3; Aurier 1892, p. 283; Valotton 1892; Saunier 1892, pp. 36–37; Morice 1904, p. 529; Meier-Graefe 1904b, p. 486; Pissarro and Venturi 1939, vol. 1, p. 189, no. 769, vol. 2, pl. 159, no. 769, as *Paysage à Saint-Charles, soleil couchant*; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 100, ill.; Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 3, pp. 57, 62, 68; Lloyd 1981, p. 2, ill.; Mukherjee 1982, p. 43, ill.; Clarke 1990, pp. 428–29; Reid 1993, pp. 116–17, ill.; Williamstown 1996–97, p. 23, fig. 17; Boardingham 1996, pp. 104–5, ill.; Christie's 2000b, p. 34, ill.; Pissarro and Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005, vol. 3, p. 597, no. 910, ill., as *Landscape at Saint-Charles, Sunset*; Williamstown–New York 2006–7, p. 77.

TECHNICAL REPORT The original fabric is a commercially primed, finely woven linen (28 threads/cm), lined to a slightly heavier fabric, with an expandable replacement stretcher. The lining is quite stiff, and appears to have a glue/paste adhesive. The heavily impastoed paint film is in good condition, with only scattered age cracks and a few old losses along the right edge. Indentations from a frame rabbet indicate the picture was first framed while the paint was still soft. The painting was cleaned of a strongly yellowed varnish in 1979 and lightly revarnished. There are small retouches along the edges to complete the off-square rectangle.

No underdrawing is detectable. There are no visible areas of ground color and almost no painted lines to indicate forms. The paint is up to four or five layers thick, and is applied primarily in small, short, overlapping daubs. Large

sweeping brushstrokes were used only in the sky. The paint application is stiff, yet rich enough in medium to create loops and bridges in the impastos. There are a few yellow-green and purplish pink strokes in the foreground that have a crystalline consistency, perhaps indicating that some of the paint was not fully ground and may have been lacking in medium. The picture was signed before completion, as pink and bright orange strokes of paint overlap parts of the name and date. Several small holes through the front in each corner suggest that the painting was executed pinned to a board or another secondary support, and later tacked to a stretcher frame.

1. Camille Pissarro to Paul Durand-Ruel, 6 Nov. 1886, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 2, p. 75; translation from Rewald 1972, p. 64.
2. For Pissarro's submissions, see Berson 1996, vol. 2, pp. 246–48.
3. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 4 June 1887, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 2, p. 181; translation from Rewald 1972, p. 115.
4. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 6 Sept. 1888, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 2, p. 251; translation from Rewald 1972, p. 132.
5. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 11 Dec. 1890, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 2, p. 373; translation from Rewald 1972, p. 141.
6. For references to Pissarro's eye problems at this period, see Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 3, pp. 9, 11, 111, 113.
7. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 10 June 1891, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 3, p. 93; translation from Rewald 1972, p. 175. One of the works in question is described as being a size 25 canvas, which measures approximately 81 x 65 cm, the dimensions of the Clark picture.
8. The distinctive device of the peripheral, bisected tree reappears in several paintings dated in the following year, 1892: see, for example, Pissarro and Venturi 1939, vol. 2, nos. 774, 777–79, 794–802.
9. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 23 Oct. 1891, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 3, p. 140; Rewald 1972, p. 185.
10. According to Pissarro and Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005, pp. 595, 597, Durand-Ruel was first offered *Landscape at Saint-Charles* in April 1891, but declined to purchase it.
11. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 13 Dec. 1891, in Bailly-Herzberg 1980–91, vol. 3, p. 164; Rewald 1972, p. 189.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Although the exhibition catalogue states that the painting was lent by "M[onsieur] L.," a name that cannot be identified, the work had been bought by Durand-Ruel several months earlier.

252 | Port of Rouen, Unloading Wood 1898

Oil on canvas, 74 x 92 cm

Lower left: C. Pissarro. 98

Acquired by the Clark in honor of John E. Sawyer (Institute Trustee 1962–89), 1989

1989.3

During the first three decades of his career, Pissarro famously devoted himself to rural France, becoming a painter of "beautiful landscapes, so calm and so full of a kind of country religiosity that covers the fields of greenery with a melancholy tint," as the critic Georges Rivière wrote in 1877.¹ His rare pictures of Paris, such as *The Outer Boulevards*, *Snow* (fig. 250.1) and *Boulevard Rochechouart* (cat. 250), were the exceptions that proved this general rule, though in retrospect their compositions can seem like models for future exploration. From 1896 until shortly before his death in 1903, however, Pissarro unexpectedly reversed these earlier priorities, producing more than three hundred substantial canvases of the cities of Dieppe, Le Havre, Paris, and Rouen.² Working with remarkable assurance on his new themes, he now embraced the urban and the contemporary, from thronged boulevards to bustling quays, from vistas of factory chimneys and bridges to street processions and busy parks. Almost immediately, this departure was hailed by his fellow artists and endorsed by collectors, prompting Pissarro to return to certain of these sites and to make "more cityscapes than any other major Impressionist," as Richard Brettell has pointed out.³ Rouen was central to this project: after two trips there in 1896 that resulted in almost thirty works, he made a final visit in the late summer and early fall of 1898, when *Port of Rouen, Unloading Wood* and eighteen other canvases were completed. Approaching seventy and in variable health, Pissarro was to see many of these pictures included in successful exhibitions in France and America, and to experience the first period of financial stability in his life.

The genesis of Pissarro's urban panoramas has been carefully traced, both within his own oeuvre and against the background of his many city-painting predecessors and colleagues. In the 1870s, it was Monet, Caillebotte, and Renoir who most clearly prepared the ground, exploring elevated vantage points and steep perspectives, as well as new kinds of notation for the distant human form. Unprecedented motifs, such