



**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,
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

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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 Amphisa* (cat. 3)

The ground is a water-sensitive commercially applied layer. Its pinkish-gray color is visible throughout the surface. There was no elaborate underdrawing found with infrared light. A few dark lines, discovered in the branches of the left stand of trees, had been painted over by the sky color, with new branches added after the sky was completed. The surface was executed in medium-rich strokes in an open, dry-looking manner. Wet-into-wet paint seems to appear only in the thicker foreground areas. In general, the tree trunks and some branches were laid in first, followed by the sky, and then the wispiest branches. The figures were painted over the grass, and the roadway was laid in after the grass was completed, but in a reserve left for it. Small holes in the front corners suggest that the picture may have been painted while pinned to a board and later stretched.

1. See Sylvie Patin, "Veneux-Nadon and Moret-sur-Loing: 1880–1899," in *London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93*, p. 184. In the same letter, Sisley pointed out that Moret was "two hours away from Paris" by train.
2. In 1882, Sisley moved to Moret from his home in Veneux-Nadon, near the site of the picture. It has been assumed, therefore, that *Banks of the Seine at By* was painted between 1880 and his departure for Moret. For a map of the area and the proposed sites of these paintings, see *London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93*, p. 182. The rivers in question were the Seine and the Loing: the latter was joined at Moret by the Loing canal.
3. The site is described by William Johnston in *London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93*, pp. 188 and 190.
4. Shone 1992, p. 134.
5. The same purplish crimson is used for the artist's signature, suggesting that this range of reds and pinks was added or extended toward the end of the painting process, in a final animation of the scene.
6. Examples of drawings that relate to Sisley's landscape paintings have been preserved, though the majority are clearly records of—rather than studies for—such pictures: see *London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93*, pp. 192, 204, 206, 208, and 210. Richard Brettell argues that Sisley may also have used sketchbooks in the preparation of such works (*London–Amsterdam–Williamstown 2000–2001*, p. 190). Sisley's only surviving sketchbook, now in the Louvre, is discussed in *London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93*, p. 204. Dealing with landscapes of 1883–85, it is thought by some scholars to be a record of completed paintings, not a series of preparatory studies.
7. D 391. See the entry on this work by William Johnston in *London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93*, p. 188. The argument that the painting shows the landscape in springtime also seems applicable to *Banks of the Seine at By*. Johnston points out that the projection of the shadows in *The Small Meadows in Spring* toward the northeast indicates a time "late in the day"; conversely, the southwest direc-

tion of the shadows in the Clark canvas would therefore suggest morning.

8. The identity of the works he submitted is not known.
9. The figure was added over a passage of already dry paint; see Technical Report.
10. Notes in the Clark's curatorial file and a 1956 letter from Henri Elfers mistakenly indicate that Durand-Ruel bought *Banks of the Seine at By* directly from the artist.

307 | The Loing and the Mills of Moret, Snow Effect 1891

Oil on canvas, 58.7 x 81.6 cm

Lower left: Sisley 91

1955-545

Of the four paintings by Sisley that were acquired by Sterling Clark, *The Loing and the Mills of Moret, Snow Effect* was both the latest in the artist's career and—paradoxically—the closest to early Impressionist practice. Unlike the other three pictures, for example, it was probably executed in a single session, without subsequent modification or extensive work in the studio.¹ Such river subjects had been favored by Sisley and his colleagues almost from the beginning of their collective venture, encouraging them to find equivalents in paint for land, water, and sky, and the vibrancy of atmosphere. Characteristic also was Sisley's knowledge of the territory in question, which he depicted at different seasons and in various technical registers for almost a decade. In the Clark canvas, the delicacy of his technique and its appropriateness to the chosen scene are immediately striking. Throughout, the brushwork is liquid and supple, spreading thin, pale colors across the surface in response to the flow of the river and the bright winter air. Broader strokes capture the turbulence beneath the mill at right and the progression of water downstream, while feathery touches of gold suggest poplar trees on the opposite bank and slashes of blue become their shadows. Applied into still-wet paint, these marks seem to encapsulate moments of perception and the thrill of nature directly encountered.²

In 1880, Sisley had moved to the area of Moret-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau, slowly extending his rural repertoire to embrace the challenge of the town itself.³ Known for its picturesque river crossing and



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arched stone bridge, Moret featured several mills that were still powered by the waters of the Loing. Initially dismissing the location as merely charming, Sisley produced a sequence of bold compositions that set trees and riverbanks against Moret's stark architecture.⁴ The bridge is included in many of them, though in the Clark painting the artist turned away from this structure, leaving it just outside the frame to the right. Clustered around the bridge were the tall mills, like those visible in Sisley's canvas, which became the fulcrum of almost thirty of the works that he executed between 1888 and 1892.⁵ Over this period, we seem to follow him as he tracks around the motif, painting it from across the river, changing his angle of view, advancing and retreating from its massive, dominant forms. In almost every case, the man-made bulk acts as a foil to the transience of nature, as fine clouds pass overhead or reflections tremble in the river. This extended play between geometry and light, the constructed and the evanescent, has sometimes been seen as an informal series, an improvised variant of the procedure followed by Sisley's friend, Claude Monet, during these same years. In 1893, as Monet

embarked on the sequence to which *Rouen Cathedral, the Façade in Sunlight* (cat. 229) belongs, Sisley, too, initiated a suite devoted to a Gothic church, that of Notre-Dame at Moret.⁶

As with Monet's initiatives, works such as *The Loing and the Mills of Moret, Snow Effect* raise questions about the role of the painter's subject matter during this decade. In one sense, Sisley's pictures are frankly topographical, recording the lay of the land and the integration of town and country, as well as the appearance of Moret's principal buildings. Nothing in his previous oeuvre, however, or in the little that is known about Sisley's personal life, indicates a specific concern for regional history or for the primitive industry represented by the mills. Rather, his pictures appear to be statements about presence and particularity, documents of the artist's growing identification with Moret and the authenticity of his experience there. *The Loing and the Mills of Moret, Snow Effect* is a compelling account of cold and solitude, translated with extraordinary assurance into a film of paint, a late flowering of Impressionist sensibility that transcends its local roots.⁷ RK

PROVENANCE [Possibly Marie Harriman Gallery, New York];⁸ Gerald Brooks, New York; [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 1 Apr. 1946, as *Paysage, effet de Neige*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1946–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Palm Beach 1937;⁹ Williamstown 1956a, no. 125, pl. 42; Milwaukee 1988, pp. 134–35, no. 50, ill.

REFERENCES Daulte 1959, no. 781, ill.; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 141, ill.; Hamilton 1970, p. 102, fig. 89, as *Landscape, Snow Effect*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a linen of moderate weight (19 threads/cm) with a very taut lining glued onto a linen of similar weight (16 x 19 threads/cm). The lining is American and was probably done close to the time of the 1946 sale. All the old labels were transferred to the new six-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The tacking edges are presumed missing, although a half-inch width of the left edge was saved, opened out, and included in the surface dimensions. There are scattered dark age cracks in the sky, some weave enhancement, and scattered moated impastos from the lining pressure. Old vertical mechanical cracks from an impact damage in the lower left quadrant 7.6 cm above the signature are probably the reason for the lining. The present varnish is a thin, natural resin layer over scattered residues of an earlier coating. The edges are retouched, especially on the left extension, and there are scattered retouches in the sky and one in the left water area. In reflected light, the strong vertical threads of the original canvas are very visible.

The ground is a commercially applied gray color, which is visible between the paint strokes throughout the surface. There may be a few underdrawing marks for the shoreline and horizon, which are visible as short lines and charcoal deposits under magnification. A few incongruous strokes in the river seem unrelated to the final image. The paint was applied wet-into-wet in a paste consistency, with a few scumbles and no glazing. The artist used the prominent threads to capture individual paint strokes to create the flickering effects of light. Small adjustments were added to the lower left sky after the trees were completed. Small contraction drying holes in the paint and ground layer may be the result of the artist working in cold weather.

1. See Technical Report; examination of the surface indicates no evidence of preliminary drafting, underpainting, or pentimenti.
2. In many areas, brushstrokes clearly disturb the paint previously applied or blend with existing colors.
3. Sisley first settled in the area in 1880, living at Veneux-Nadon, where *Banks of the Seine at By* (cat. 306) was painted. He subsequently moved between Moret, Veneux-Nadon, and nearby Les Sablons before finally settling in Moret in 1889. See London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93, pp. 267–73.

4. His first impressions of Moret were reported in a letter to Monet: see Sylvie Patin, “Veneux-Nadon and Moret-sur-Loing: 1880–1899,” in London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93, p. 184.
5. See, for example, D 663–781. The mills in the Clark painting were situated in mid-stream, at the center of the bridge, a situation evident in a work such as D 677. A letter from the Mayor of Moret in the Clark’s curatorial file, dated 1985, reports that these mills were destroyed during the German retreat in World War II.
6. See D 818–22, 834–40.
7. While Sisley may have worked in the open air, it is also possible that he sheltered in the mill at the opposite end of the bridge, which is clearly visible in works such as D 817.
8. A label on the back of the painting from the Harriman Gallery suggests that it may have been owned by the gallery, or simply exhibited there. The gallery was in business between 1930 and 1942.
9. From Knoedler invoice in the Clark’s curatorial file.

Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida

Spanish, 1863–1923

308 | Beach at Valencia c. 1904

Oil on laminate cardboard, 8.6 x 12.3 cm

Lower left: J Sorolla B

Gift of Harding F. Bancroft in memory of his wife, Jane Northrop Bancroft

1984.165

The success of Joaquín Sorolla’s work is based on a combination of his skills as a draftsman and colorist and on his embrace of modern ideas, such as an interest in plein air painting and attention to light. He adapted these ideas to a very personal range of subjects, including beach scenes, especially depictions of the calm blue Mediterranean waters off the sunny Levantine coast of Spain.

The beaches of Valencia increasingly inspired Sorolla’s work from the first part of the 1890s to the end of his career. Early examples of works based on this subject are, among other paintings, *The Happy Day* (1892; Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Udine), *The Nets* (1893; private collection), and one of his greatest early masterpieces, *The Return from Fishing* (1894; Musée d’Orsay, Paris), a monumental painting depicting two oxen dragging a fisherman’s boat, its sail billowing, to the shore. This