



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

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Imitator of Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas

116 | **Dancer with a Bouquet** Before 1923

Pastel on prepared wove wood-pulp paper, 51.2 x 65.9 cm

Lower left: Degas

1955-549

Bought by Sterling Clark as a pastel by Degas, *Dancer with a Bouquet* has for some time been considered a fake. As Theodore Reff pointed out in a 1983 letter, the picture is “a pastiche of two well-known works” made by Degas in the 1870s; both were in Paris public collections when *Dancer with a Bouquet* appeared on the market.¹ While Degas sometimes made inventive variants on his own pictures, such a crude combination of two existing scenes was uncharacteristic of his practice. The handling of media in *Dancer with a Bouquet* is also somewhat heavy and the drawing uncertain—even clumsy—in places, despite the not insignificant skill of the pasticheur. The forged signature at lower left is noticeably weak. Degas’s pictures have been widely copied and imitated, sometime with fraudulent intent. The present example is among the more plausible forgeries, while reminding us of the high standards and technical consistency of the artist’s oeuvre as a whole. RK

PROVENANCE Sandevert, probably France;² [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 28 Dec. 1923, as by Degas]; Robert Sterling Clark (1923–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS New York 1940b, no. 6, ill., as *Scène de ballet*; Williamstown 1956a, no. 102, pl. 19; Williamstown 1959c, no. 4, pl. 19; Williamstown 1970, no. 4, as *Dancer with a Bouquet Bowing*.

REFERENCES Lemoisne 1946–49, vol. 2, pp. 260–61, no. 475, ill., as *Danseuse au bouquet saluant*; Browse 1949, p. 358, no. 57, pl. 57, as *Danseuse, un bouquet à la main*; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 35, ill.; Minervino 1970, p. 110, no. 511, ill.; Paris–Ottawa–New York 1988–89, p. 274.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unusual machine-made wood-pulp wove paper that has been commercially prepared on one side with a flocking or surface texture to resemble velvet. It is stamped on the reverse: “PAPIER VELOURS/ pour le Pastel” in purple ink. Although the pastel medium is unfixed, the textured surface holds extensive medium. The medium appears to have been applied both wet and dry. The blue and green backdrop colors appear to have been applied very dry and after the foreground areas. These colors cover portions of background figures. The foreground stage is comprised of brown, gray, blue, and white blended pastel. Areas of the foreground figure’s skin tones and skirt are a combination of broad and narrow pastel stick lines.

The paper has several tack holes in each corner and along the top edge of the sheet, possibly indicating that the sheet was taken on and off the drawing board several times during execution. There are several tears along the top edge that have been repaired from the reverse: a semicircular tear at center, a diagonal one at left, and an “L” shaped one at right. These tears likely occurred when the artwork was removed from a previous backing to which it had been glued around its perimeter. The paper is also skinned around the verso edges. The pastel was treated in 1970 by Alexander Yow to remove it from its backing and repair the tears. There is some delamination of the velour layer from the paper substrate along the top edge. The substrate has been toned with watercolor. LP

1. Theodore Reff to Michael Floss, 8 July 1983, in the Clark’s curatorial files. The Degas pictures in question are L 418 and 474, both now in the Musée d’Orsay, Paris.
2. The invoice from Knoedler’s sale of the picture to Clark is annotated “From the collection of Monsieur Sandevert, commissaire priseur de province.” See the Clark’s curatorial file.