



**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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Édouard Manet

French, 1832–1883

205 | Interior at Arcachon 1871

Oil on canvas, 39.2 x 54 cm

Lower right: Manet; possibly on book on table: Manet
1955-552

This small, broadly executed canvas has been celebrated for a number of reasons, many of them related to Manet's personal history. Painted soon after the end of the Franco-Prussian war, it marks the period of calm that followed the artist's experiences in the Siege of Paris as a member of the National Guard. The subject of *Interior at Arcachon* is a holiday villa, the chalet Servantie, where Manet spent several weeks with his family in March and April 1871. Situated in southwestern France near the city of Bordeaux, Arcachon was known for its beaches and oyster beds, and the wide curving bay that almost encircles the town. At left in the painting is Suzanne Leenhoff, who Manet had married in 1863; opposite her is the young man known as Léon Leenhoff Koëlla, born to Suzanne and—it was formerly believed—the illegitimate son of the artist himself.¹ Often depicted in Manet's art but rarely seen together, Suzanne and Léon are uniquely presented with equal prominence in *Interior at Arcachon*.

The composition made in these unusual circumstances is almost symmetrical, as if to reassert the stability of Manet's life after the events of the war. Four other canvases painted during this vacation achieve a similar plainness and regularity, though all are landscapes of the bay itself.² *Interior at Arcachon* is centered around a tranquil view of the bay, the distant promontory that defines it, and a glimpse of the nearby harbor. The weather at the time was clearly warm enough to allow both windows to remain open, their lucid shapes defining and linking the positions of wife and son. Manet's preliminary drawing shows that the room was more crowded in his first conception (fig. 205.1), with relatively larger figures and correspondingly less of the restful gray background.³ The outdoor panorama was also more confused, featuring a large sailing boat and some dark, intrusive railings nearby. By removing these elements from his final design, Manet established a stable center to the canvas and a gentler transition from the exterior world to the modest domestic space of the chalet Servantie. Poised on



Fig. 205.1. Édouard Manet, *Study for "Interior at Arcachon,"* 1871. Watercolor, brown ink, and graphite on off-white wove "graph" paper, 18.5 x 23.7 cm. Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Bequest of William G. Russell Allen (1957-59)

either side of the silhouetted table, Suzanne and Léon offer variations on the theme of repose, one gazing outward, the other lost in his inner thoughts. Closer inspection reveals that Manet's wife has paused in the act of writing, while her son appears to smoke a cigarette, a half-open book on his knee and another substantial volume at his elbow. The true subject of the picture, we might say, is stillness, quietly echoed in the dark, balanced forms of the sitters and the gently rhyming curves of limbs and furniture.

Interior at Arcachon was never exhibited by Manet and remained in the family's possession after his death in 1883.⁴ This decision to retain the picture may have been determined by its relatively loose handling, a characteristic of several of Manet's exploratory works during these years that were similarly kept out of circulation. The Clark canvas is notably varied in its finish, ranging from such delicate passages as the window view to the roughly scraped and barely resolved areas of floor. When exhibiting in public Manet had a marked preference for the unified image and the grand statement, showing his less polished drafts only to friends. The emotionally loaded subject of *Interior at Arcachon* must also have added to its private status, as a poignant record of a crisis in the artist's life.



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When war broke out in September 1870, Manet had arranged for Suzanne to accompany his mother and Léon to the Pyrenees, leaving him in Paris as the Prussian army approached. Almost immediately, Manet wrote for news of his family's safe arrival and told her that Paris was "deadly sad."⁵ His subsequent letters described the artillery barrages around him and the casualties among his artist colleagues: "Poor Cuvelier, Degas's friend, was killed," he announced on 25 October.⁶ Food became scarce and a bitter winter heightened the misery of the populace, while Manet urged Suzanne to write and increasingly yearned to see her; in January 1871, he promised, "I will come to find you as soon as I can."⁷

After the Armistice, Manet hurried to the Pyrenees to join Suzanne and Léon, then traveled with them to Bordeaux and on to Arcachon. He made at least one paint-

ing at each stage of this progress and corresponded with friends and admirers, evidently anxious to resume his career. Before the war, he had explored a subject currently shared with Degas, that of two or more figures in purposeful or tantalizing proximity, most famously in such works as *The Balcony* of 1868–69 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) and *The Music Lesson* of 1870 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).⁸ Some of this group of pictures had included Suzanne and Léon, allowing us to speculate that *Interior at Arcachon* was a trial run for other paintings of this kind. Still puzzling is that the Fogg sketch initially showed an empty chair at right (evident beneath the drawing of Léon), as if Manet had intended to paint Suzanne alone. Had he done so, the resulting picture would have curiously matched Manet's vision of his wife in exile, even to the hope that she might be writing to him in Paris. Significant also, perhaps, are the

very brief mentions of Léon in Manet's correspondence from the war-torn capital, adding further to the uncertainty about their relationships at the time he painted *Interior at Arcachon*. RK

PROVENANCE [Possibly Durand-Ruel, Paris];⁹ Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, New York (by 1902–7); Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, New York, by descent (1907–d. 1929); Electra Havemeyer Webb, New York, her daughter, by descent (1929–43, consigned to Knoedler, 1 Apr. 1943);¹⁰ [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 12 Apr. 1943, as *Intérieur de la Famille Manet à Arcachon*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1943–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1956a, no. 110, pl. 27, as *Intérieur de la famille Manet à Arcachon*; New York 1967, no. 23; Paris–New York 1983, pp. 329–31, no. 127, ill. (exhibited in New York only); Copenhagen 1989, pp. 108–9, no. 24, ill.; New York 1993, pp. 27, 354–55, no. 352, ill., and pl. 27, as *Manet's Family Home in Arcachon*; Hanover 1994, no cat.; Paris 1997–98, pp. 53–54, 105, no. 21, ill., as *Intérieur de la famille Manet à Arcachon*; Stuttgart 2002–3, pp. 58–59, 235, no. 25, fig. 65; Chicago–Philadelphia–Amsterdam 2003–4, pp. 78, 139, pl. 52; Williamstown–New York 2006–7, p. 98, fig. 89; Dublin 2008, pp. 14, 22–23, 96–97, no. 22, fig. 7; Tokyo 2010, pp. 33, 92–93, 308, no. II-6, ill.

REFERENCES Duret 1902, not listed in 1st or 2nd eds. (3rd ed., p. 354, no. 137; 4th ed., p. 254, no. 137), as *Scène d'intérieur*; Moreau-Nélaton 1926, vol. 1, pp. 129, 135, fig. 150, vol. 2, p. 114; Tabarant 1930, p. 71; Havemeyer 1931, p. 400, as *Interior*; Tabarant 1931, pp. 217, 580, no. 164, as *Intérieur de la famille Manet à Arcachon*; Colin 1932, p. 74; Jamot and Wildenstein 1932, p. 141, no. 193, fig. 334; Rey 1938, p. 163, no. 103, pl. 103; Graber 1941, p. 310; Jedlicka 1941, pp. 114, 243; Tabarant 1947, pp. 189, 538, 608, no. 179, ill., as *Intérieur de la famille Manet à Arcachon*; Bataille 1955, p. 92 (rev. ed. 1983, p. 82); Comstock 1956, p. 78; Havemeyer 1961, pp. 221–22; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 76, ill.; Philadelphia–Chicago 1966–67, p. 131; Siegfried 1966, p. 343, fig. 49; Orienti 1967, p. 100, no. 150, ill.; *Bulletin de la Société d'études pour la connaissance d'Edouard Manet* 1968, p. 22, as *Mme Manet et Léon à Arcachon*; Rouart and Wildenstein 1975, vol. 1, pp. 152–53, no. 170, ill.; Oshima 1981, p. 35, ill.; Collins 1985, pp. 60, 62–63; Weitzenhoffer 1986, p. 112, fig. 63, as *Manet's Family Home in Arcachon*; Wollheim 1987, pp. 150–51, fig. 113; Gronberg 1988, pp. 320, 323, pl. 55; Allen 1991, p. 161, fig. 5.8; Perutz 1993, p. 151, pl. 40; Kern et al. 1996, pp. 66–67, ill., as *Manet's Family at Home in Arcachon*; *Antiques* 1997, p. 523; Locke 2001, pp. 127–28, fig. 61; Lobstein 2002, p. 73; Amsterdam 2004, pp. 56–57, figs. 50–51; Soubiran 2004, pp. 41–42, ill.; San Francisco–Raleigh–Cleveland 2006–7, pp. 29–30, fig. 13; Ann Arbor–Dallas 2009–10, p. 87, fig. 32; Madrid 2010–11, p. 33, fig. 16.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine-weave linen (25 x 28 threads/cm), glue-paste lined to a coarser fabric (13 threads/cm). The artist's tacking margins were removed, but the five-member pine stretcher may be original. The lining appears to have been done early on, and the painting was cleaned of a discolored varnish in 1988. At that time, older retouches masking solvent abrasion were noted, especially extensive in the two dark costumes, pointing to a previous cleaning probably at the time of lining. Some thinner passages may not be solvent damaged but deliberately thinned by the artist's working technique. Remaining patches of old varnish, especially in the dark passages of the lower half of the picture, have hairline age cracks. The primary signature is also still heavily coated with older varnish. There is new inpainting in the man's costume outlines and the table leg.

The thin, off-white ground is a commercially applied layer. Cusping in the fabric can be seen along the top edge. There is a gray wash over much of the lower half, giving the appearance of a partial gray ground. Most of the thin, brush-applied black ink underdrawing can be seen equally well with the unaided eye or infrared reflectography. There were no alterations seen between the underdrawing and the paint layers. In the final paint, thin washes contrast with fluid opaque strokes in a wet-into-wet application, with almost no impastos. Sgraffito work, possibly contained in the lower sketch layer, creates an indistinct outline to the central table's support pedestal. The picture was painted 0.6 cm short of the top edge of the canvas, and there are fine, short, dark brush hairs scattered in the paint.

1. For Léon's paternity, see Locke 2001, pp. 114–46.
2. RW, vol. 1, 166–69.
3. In Paris–New York 1983, p. 331, Charles Moffett argued that the drawing may have been subsequently modified by the artist. *Under the Lamp* (RW vol. 2, 349) is a summary sketch of a comparable scene by night.
4. For the painting's early history, see Paris–New York 1983, pp. 330–31.
5. Moreau-Nélaton 1926, vol. 1, p. 124: "Paris est mortellement triste."
6. *Ibid.*, p. 123: "le pauvre Cuvellier, l'ami de Degas, a été tué." Manet appears to be referring to Joseph Cuvelier, a sculptor close to Degas at this time: see Paris–Ottawa–New York 1988–89, p. 58.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 127: "j'irai vous chercher aussitôt que cela se pourra."
8. RW vol. 1, 134, 152.
9. The Havemeyers may have bought this painting from Durand-Ruel, as they did many of their other Manets, but this work does not appear in the dealer's stock book. See Paris–New York 1983, p. 331, and New York 1993, p. 355.
10. The painting was also on deposit at Durand-Ruel, New York, 13–16 Feb. 1931. See New York 1993, p. 355.