



**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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334 | The Gamekeeper 1850s

Oil on panel, 46 x 37.4 cm

Lower left: C. TROYON.

1955.563

Troyon's paintings of animals found a ready market and made him a wealthy man. In the mid-1850s, he told Jean-François Gigoux, "I will never dare tell you what people pay me; you'd think that these people were crazy."¹ In the same period he bought a plot of land in Montmartre, between the rue des Martyrs

and the boulevard Rochechouart and commissioned Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879) to design and build a house for him.² Such success had a price, however. By the early 1850s Troyon was having trouble with his eyes, a condition that worsened, some said, as a result of overwork. He continued to paint at a rapid rate but did not live long enough to enjoy the wealth he had accumulated. (His estate was estimated to total close to two million francs, a sum well in excess of five million of today's dollars.)³ In the early 1860s, Troyon was stricken with attacks of paralysis, which seem to have led to fits of madness and eventual institutionalization. He died in 1865, at fifty-four.

Hunting dogs proved to be a particularly popular subject for Troyon. He painted them throughout the 1850s, in pictures ranging in size from panels like the Clark's to large canvases more than a meter wide. Alert and engaging, the animals are depicted either alone, as in the magnificent *Hound Pointing* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in pairs, or in small groups, sometimes with but often without a gamekeeper.⁴ The artist came to know hunting dogs well through summer visits to his friend Léon-Félix Loysel, who raised the animals near Sologne in the Touraine, on the left bank of the Loire River. Troyon's intimate knowledge of these working dogs prompted a reviewer for the periodical *L'Artiste* to comment in 1855: "His several studies of dogs . . . prove that Troyon has studied thoroughly . . . the anatomy of the animals, and that, when he wanted to treat them in detail, that is to say, without having them set off his landscapes, no one gets the better of him in this genre, because no one knows better than he does their life and their habits."⁵

The painting at the Clark is particularly powerful in its simplicity. The bodies of the right-most hound and the man form a V-shape. The bright light falling on the dog on the left and the back of the dog on the right, combined with the tail pointing to the upper right, opens up the picture, suggesting a vast expanse behind the figures. The plain behind them stretches to an indeterminate distance, its horizontality broken only by a tree above the haunches of the right-hand dog. In its skillful manipulation of light and line, this relatively small painting is, in its way, as striking as the much larger painting of a single dog in Boston. Unlike that larger picture, however, the Clark's possesses a personality in the form of the left-hand dog, who looks out of the picture, meeting the eyes of the viewer in the way dogs do.

Part of the appeal of Troyon's depictions of dogs lies in the fact that he paints only a few animals at a time, doing doglike things. This recording of dogs as they really are distinguishes his paintings from the artificiality of the posed portraits of royal hunting dogs by Alexandre-François Desportes in the eighteenth century.⁶ Allied to and perhaps more important than the focus on individual dogs in Troyon's paintings is the near-total absence of blood and death. These are, after all, hunting dogs, trained to run down and sometimes kill large game. Often included in Troyon's dog pictures, as here, is the gamekeeper, wearing a broad-brimmed hat of either straw or felt and a blue smock. A gun can sometimes be seen slung over his shoulder (as in the two paintings of hunting dogs in the Musée

du Louvre, Paris, *Gamekeeper Stopped near His Dogs* of 1854 and *Gamekeeper Leading His Dogs in the Forest* of 1854–56), but it is there by implication even when not visible. The relatively small number of dogs also makes it possible to focus on the dogs as individuals, apart from a pack. European artists for centuries had depicted these working dogs in tapestries, paintings, and sculptures as necessary players in the upper-class pursuit of hunting.⁷ Troyon's contemporaries would have immediately placed these eminently doggy canines in the context of privilege and blood sport, and it is likely that purchasers of these pictures were either members of the hunting elite or people who aspired to that milieu. FEW

PROVENANCE Laurent-Richard, Paris (his sale, Drouot, Paris, 7 Apr. 1873, no. 60, as *Garde et chiens*, sold to Allard); [Galerie J. Allard, Paris, from 1873]; Count Frédéric Alexis Louis Pillet-Will, Paris (d. 1911); Maurice or Frédéric Pillet-Will, his son, by descent (from 1911, probably sold to Allard, 1919); [Galerie J. Allard, Paris, probably in 1919];⁸ [Knoedler, Paris, sold to Clark, 4 June 1919, as *Le garde chasse*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1919–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1956a, no. 132, pl. 49; Williamstown 1984a, p. 65, no. 96.

REFERENCES Soullié 1900b, p. 78, as *Garde et chiens*; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 150, ill.; *Antiques* 1997, pp. 524, 527, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a mahogany panel (0.4 cm thick) that had been cradled, probably by the original fabricator or supplier. The entire cradle was removed in 1981 because it was restricting the panel's movement. The reverse has been sanded lightly to remove old adhesive and varnished as a moisture seal. The panel is presently stable with a very slight convex warp. The condition of the paint layer is very good, with only a few drying cracks in the thick white paint strokes. The painting was cleaned of a heavy grime layer and brown varnish in 1981. The accompanying examination report noted that some glazes were sensitive to solvents, which explains the patches of old natural resin varnish visible in ultraviolet light. Old varnish residues are particularly deep in the thinly painted parts of the gamekeeper's face, the dogs, and the foreground area.

The ground layer is an off-white color, and probably commercially applied. There was no underdrawing detected, although there may be a monochromatic paint sketch in dark brown below the paint. There was a reserve left in the sky where the figure's head appears. Old losses in the sky indicate a first color layer was bluer and more thinly applied than the final gray color. The paint layer is complex, with stiff paste brushwork with scumbles and glazes in the dark pas-

sages. It appears that the landscape was quickly painted first and left to dry before the artist continued with details and texturing. A green layer encompassing an odd horizontal stroke beneath the figure may indicate either a roughing-in of the landscape or the beginnings of a discarded image. The X-radiograph shows several long horizontal lines of brushwork, 1 cm wide and extending from the left edge through the figure and dogs. This lower brushwork appears to have been scraped down to soften its presence. There are also several anomalous vertical paint lines in the upper left quadrant. The signature is executed in a thin brown glaze.

1. Gigoux 1885, p. 274: "Je n'oserai jamais vous dire ce que l'on me paye cela; c'est à croire que ces gens sont fous."
2. Miquel 1975, vol. 2, pp. 335, 337, says the house was begun in 1854 and the artist took occupancy in 1856, whereas Gigoux gives 1856 as the date of the land purchase.
3. Dumesnil 1888, p. 208. Currency conversions are notoriously imprecise. The figure quoted is courtesy of Jonathan Liebowitz, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, via a query put to the H-Net France listserv, a source for which I thank Hollis Clayson.
4. See Soullié 1900b for titles and sizes.
5. Charles Perrier, "Exposition Universelle des Beaux-Arts," *L'Artiste*, 5e sér., 15 (22 July 1855): 155–58; p. 156, quoted in Miquel 1975, vol. 2, p. 337: "Ses diverses études des chiens . . . prouvent que Troyon a étudié à fond . . . l'anatomie des animaux, et que, quand il voudra s'occuper d'eux plus spécialement, c'est-à-dire sans les faire servir à rehausser ses paysages, nul ne l'emportera sur lui en ce genre, parce que nul ne connaît mieux que lui leur vie et leurs moeurs."
6. See *Pompée and Florissant, Dogs of Louis XV* (1739; Musée national du Château, Compiègne), in Paris–Gien 1998, p. 51.
7. Prime examples are *The Unicorn Tapestries* (The Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); any number of hunt scenes by Peter Paul Rubens in the seventeenth century; and, in the nineteenth century, pictures devoted to the hunt by Gustave Courbet, *The Kill* (1867; Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon) being the most graphic. For a variety of depictions of hunting dogs in France in the nineteenth century, see Paris 1999–2000.
8. Troyon's *The Gooseherd* (cat. 333) also belonged to Pillet-Will, and it is likely that his son sold both paintings to Allard in 1919.

335 | Going to Market on a Misty Morning 1851

Oil on panel, 65.3 x 52.5 cm
Lower left: C. TROYON. 1851.
1955.880

In the early morning, before the sun has risen high enough to burn off the mists that have gathered overnight, a peasant woman leads a cow and a flock of sheep along a road toward the viewer. So thick is the mist that the outlines of other figures—a man mounted on horseback in the middle and a couple at the far right, walking in the opposite direction—are indistinct. The ostensible subject, a peasant woman taking her livestock to market, is subsumed in Troyon's overriding interest in the specific effect of backlit fog.

The trees framing the picture make a funnel of the road that leads up the middle. Animals and humans moving down the road are very close to the picture plane, so close that they seem to spill out of the scene. The wholly fictive vantage point of the viewer is also on the roadway but elevated, as if on horseback. The sense of immediacy created by the animals seen head-on, with the sun, low in the sky, casting long shadows ahead of them, reminded a twentieth-century writer of traveling shots in movies.¹

The artist returned to this striking composition, with variations in details and size, for at least ten years; this picture, dated 1851, is its first known appearance. The versions that can be identified today can be found in the Mesdag Collection, The Hague; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.² The picture in Russia figured in the Salon of 1859, where it was one of the paintings that the young Claude Monet admired when he first visited Paris.³

The subject underlying the depiction of a peasant taking her livestock to market is the intersection of country and, if not city, then a town large enough to offer a market.⁴ A market brings the peasant into a comprehensible urban structure, rendering the country dweller dependent on the world outside the farm. For the city dweller, such an economic arrangement strips the peasant class of whatever form of threat it was perceived to embody. If the peasant needs a market, a form of urbanism, to survive, then the flow of power is unambiguous and unidirectional: from the city or town to the country. A woman as comely as the one Troyon paints here might encourage thoughts of a different if related form of commerce in flesh.