



**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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[www.clarkart.edu](http://www.clarkart.edu)

Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications  
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**330 | Dr. Péan Operating** c. 1891–92

Oil on laminate cardboard, 73.9 x 49.9 cm

Lower left: HTL [monogram]

1955.567

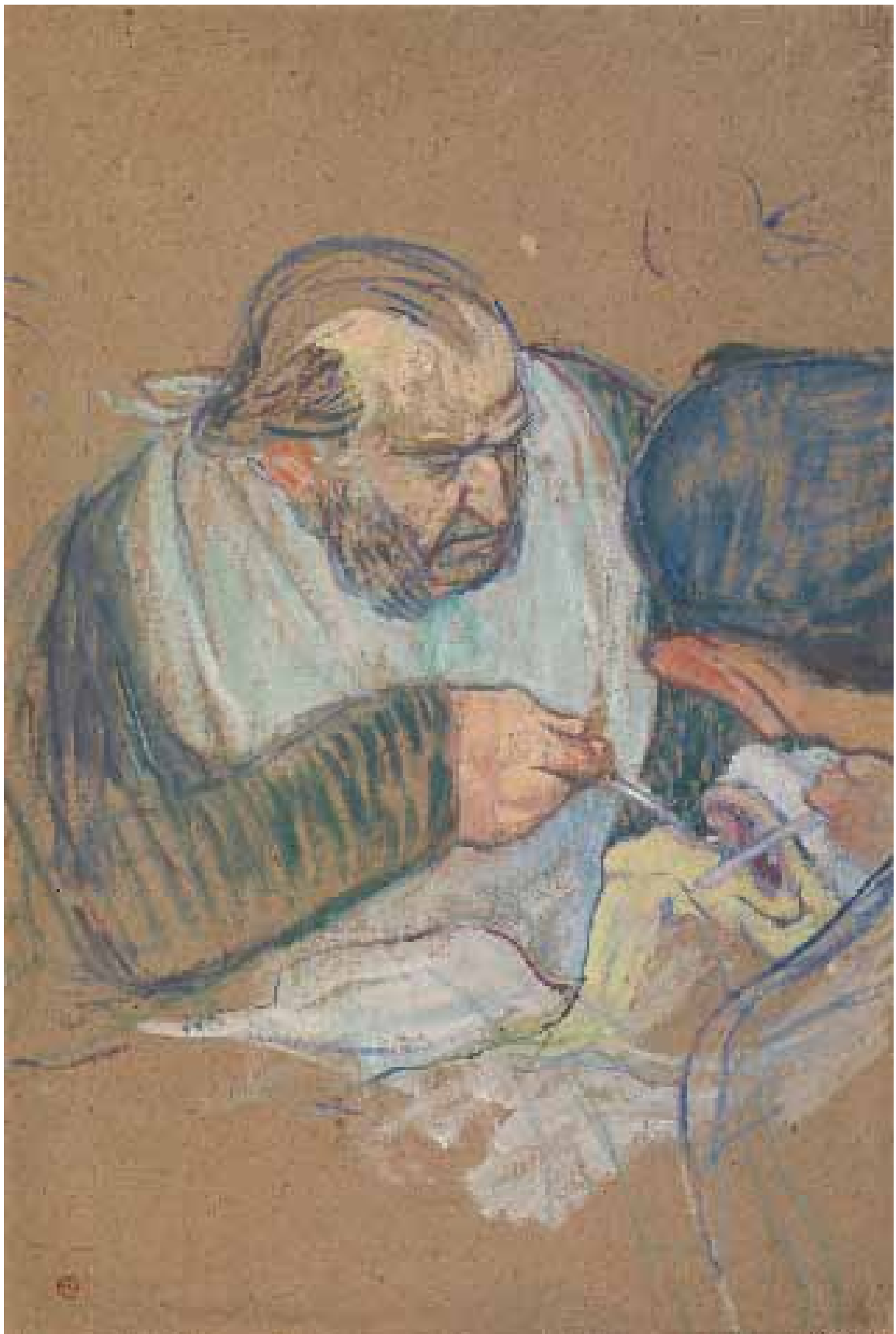
Toulouse-Lautrec once commented, “if I weren’t a painter, I would like to be a doctor,” according to Louis-Numa Baragnon, a journalist who wrote about Lautrec and Péan in the year following the artist’s death.<sup>1</sup> Lautrec’s sketches and paintings of Doctor Jules-Émile Péan (1830–1898) give clear evidence of this interest. Péan was a renowned surgeon who wrote a nine-volume book, *Lessons in Clinical Surgery* (1876–95), and whose name is still associated with the forceps he invented. He had been appointed chief of services at the Hôpital Saint-Louis in Paris’s tenth arrondissement in 1874, and would retire from that post in 1892, going on to found the Hôpital International the following year. Lautrec was likely introduced by his cousin, Gabriel Tapié de Céleyran, to Péan after Tapié de Céleyran moved to Paris in the fall of 1891 to complete his own medical studies. He soon found a position working under Dr. Péan, and it is probably thanks to this connection that Lautrec began to attend Péan’s Saturday operating sessions as a member of an often sizable group of spectators. As Maurice Joyant noted, Péan enjoyed working with an audience present and would “preach, with the accent of a peasant from Beauce, to amuse the gallery and fill the room with sound, perorating on things that had nothing to do with the daring work he was accomplishing in an open stomach, surrounded by a sunburst of clamps.”<sup>2</sup>

The present work is the result of Lautrec’s many visits to observe the surgeon at work. As Tapié recounted, Lautrec “lost little time in following me to the Hôpital Saint-Louis, where he was soon captivated by Péan’s virtuosity. He went there every Saturday morning and filled up albums with notes and sketches.”<sup>3</sup> These small sketches ranged from summary outlines of Péan’s head viewed from different angles, to a rapid sketch of feet, to more fully worked-out studies of Péan in action, often including several additional figures.<sup>4</sup> One of these sketches (D D3.182) is clearly preparatory for the present oil. It shows Péan in the same pose, gazing downward intently, but the horizontal composition is considerably different from that of the painting, omitting the patient in the lower part of the image while encompassing all of the assis-

tant’s shoulders and sharply tilted head. By shifting to a vertical format for the painting, Lautrec rendered the composition both more dynamic, choosing an unusual viewpoint that crops the assistant’s head down the middle, and more explicit, incorporating the patient’s gaping mouth. The detailed depiction of the patient, his nose and upper head covered with a white cloth presumably to isolate the operation site, is perhaps the most notable addition in the final work, as none of the sketches seem to include a patient in anything other than the most cursory manner.

It is not clear precisely what sort of operation is occurring. The earliest known titles given to the work were fairly generic, labeling it simply *The Surgeon* or *Dr. Péan Operating*. In his 1902 article, Baragnon describes this work as depicting a resection of the jaw, while Maurice Joyant listed it as *A Tracheotomy Operation by Dr. Péan, at the Hôpital International*, though he did not indicate a source or specific documentation for the title.<sup>5</sup> At least part of this designation is clearly inaccurate since, as Gale Murray has suggested, the painting likely dates to late 1891 or 1892 (Tapié de Céleyran did not arrive in Paris until about September 1891 and probably began his assistantship some time after that),<sup>6</sup> at which point Péan had not yet opened the Hôpital International. Several medical professionals suggest a similar inaccuracy in labeling the procedure a tracheotomy. Alternative proposals have included tonsillectomy or mandibulectomy, although these cannot be proven definitively either.<sup>7</sup> It seems most likely, however, that Péan is using a pair of forceps of the type he himself invented to clamp a blood vessel, not a pair of scissors as is often stated, while his assistant uses a small, straight tool perhaps to help keep the patient’s mouth open. These implements underscore Péan’s concern with cleanliness at a time when anti-septic procedures had not yet been generally adopted; indeed, he washed his hands scrupulously, cleaned his tools with boiling water, and insisted on touching surgical incisions only with instruments, as Lautrec shows, rather than with bare hands.<sup>8</sup>

Like many of Lautrec’s portraits, *Dr. Péan Operating* reveals the artist’s sharply analytical eye and his lack of interest in flattering his subject. In contrast to Henri Gervex, whose 1887 portrait of Péan (*Doctor Péan Lecturing at the Hôpital Saint-Louis on His Discovery of the Hemostatic Clamp*; Musée d’Orsay, Paris) depicts him as an elegant, learned man surrounded by attentive assistants and listeners, Lautrec focused on the surgeon’s process, his skill at performing such



a delicate and disturbingly invasive procedure. He depicts Péan's head, neck, and shoulders as a single massive form, his gaze directed intently at his patient and his gesture culminating in the almost paradoxically slender instrument that seems scarcely to fit over his thick fingers. Lautrec also painted a larger full-length portrait of Péan in the operating room that shows him from the back, identifiable only by his stocky build and the large white cloth tied around his neck.<sup>9</sup> By slightly exaggerating Péan's characteristic traits, Lautrec effectively created a shorthand that could signify the specific individual; just as his depictions of the performer Yvette Guilbert's gloves served to denote her, so Péan's solid build and white neckerchief identified him, even in the absence, as in the full-length view from the back, of almost all other elements of portraiture.

This work first belonged to Lautrec's cousin Gabriel Tapié de Céleyran, perhaps a gift in recognition of his role in introducing the artist to Péan. It was also the first painting by Lautrec that Sterling Clark purchased, though he had previously bought some of the artist's works on paper, including one drawing as early as 1919.<sup>10</sup> It seems a highly uncharacteristic image for Clark to appreciate, given its lack of finish and its confrontational quality, yet he commented several years before his purchase that he could "admire Toulouse-Lautrec as works of art but that they were not agreeable to the general public."<sup>11</sup> After owning it for several years, he also remarked to a dealer that buying another Lautrec "did not interest me particularly because very high in price and I had a good one already of 'Dr. Péan,'" suggesting that he considered this painting a representative example of the best of the artist's work, despite its challenging subject.<sup>12</sup> SL

**PROVENANCE** Dr. Gabriel Tapié de Céleyran, Paris and Albi (by 1898, until at least 1914); [Knoedler, Paris, sold to Clark, 7 Jan. 1938, as *Une opération de trachéotomie par le Docteur Péan, à l'Hôpital International*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1938–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** London 1898a, no. 51, as *The Surgeon*, lent by Tapié de Céleyran; Brussels 1902, no. 276, as *Le docteur Péan opérant*; Paris 1902b, no. 93, as *Une opération de Péan*, lent by Tapié de Céleyran; Toulouse 1907, no cat.; Paris 1914b, no. 71, as *Une Opération, par le docteur Péan*, lent by Tapié de Céleyran; Paris 1938, no. 11, as *La trachéotomie. Docteur Péan*; Williamstown 1956a, no. 131, pl. 48; Williamstown 1960a, no. 4, pl. 48; New York 1967, no. 51; Tübingen 1986–87, pp. 125–27, no. 48, ill.; Williamstown 1992b, no

cat.; London–Paris 1991–92, pp. 133, 156–57, no. 34, ill.; London–Washington 2005–6, pp. 130, 137, 226, no. 70, ill.

**REFERENCES** Baragnon 1902, p. 100; Pigasse 1908, pp. 29–33; Alexandre 1914, p. 15; Duret 1920, pp. 52–53; Coquiote 1921a, pp. 124, 208; Astre 1926, p. 82; Joyant 1926, pp. 133, 271, ill.; Joyant 1927a, p. 156, ill.; Lapparent 1927, p. 23, pl. 6; Jedlicka 1929, pp. 118–19, ill.; Schaub-Koch 1935, pp. 43, 194; Mack 1938, p. 235, pl. 40; Lassaigue 1939, p. 80, ill.; Jourdain and Adhémar 1952, p. 52, pl. 41; Lassaigue 1953, p. 54; Tietze 1953, pp. 30, 32, fig. 12; Laprade 1954, p. 23; Cooper 1955, pp. 27–28, ill.; Dortu, Grillaert, and Adhémar 1955, p. 33, pl. 8; Faison 1958, p. 173, fig. 13; Perruchot 1958, p. 177 (English ed., p. 150); *Art News* 1960a, pp. 32–33, ill.; Adhémar et al. 1962, p. 62, ill.; Bauer 1962, p. 62; Bouret 1963, p. 116; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 147, ill.; Wilenski 1963, pp. 127, 357; Huisman and Dortu 1964, p. 241; Keller 1968, p. 34, pl. 4; Schmidt 1968, pp. 40–41, fig. 17; Sugana 1969, p. 105, no. 283, ill. (English ed., p. 105, no. 283, ill.; French ed., p. 111, no. 381, ill.); Dortu 1971, vol. 2, pp. 214–15, no. P.384, ill., as *Une Opération de trachéotomie*; Cherubini 1977, p. 295, ill.; Murken and Murken-Altrogge 1977, p. 115; Thomson 1977, p. 54, fig. 24; Takami 1978, p. 81, no. 9; Chaet 1979, pp. 90–92, fig. 87; Chicago 1979, p. 26, fig. 18; Sawano, Sakai, and Abe 1979, no. 30, ill.; Chiba 1980, pp. 9, 21; Murray 1980, p. 90; Dortu and Méric 1981, vol. 2, pp. 13–14, no. 328, ill.; Moskow 1982, pp. 258–59, ill.; Faison 1982, p. 325, ill.; Lässig and Müller 1984, p. 113, fig. 166; New York 1985a, p. 38; Baron and Baron 1986, p. 192, ill.; *Der Spiegel* 1986, pp. 274–75, ill.; Carmichael and Ratzan 1991, p. 351, ill.; Denvir 1991, pp. 136, 138, fig. 108; Murray 1991, p. 254; Durozoi 1992, pp. 26–27, ill.; Murray 1992, pp. 141–42, 168, pl. 55; Rutkow 1993, p. 423, fig. 258; Frey 1994, p. 292, pl. 30; Sweetman 1999, pp. 264, 266, ill.; Colton 2002, p. 66, ill.; Emery and Emery 2006, p. 88, fig. 44; Lavini, 2009, p. 112, fig. 15; London 2011a, p. 47, fig. 18.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a slightly convex, yellowish-gray cardboard, with an irregular surface texture and considerable tonal variation. The surface has darkened in the upper right corner, and there is an old gouge in the bare support in the lower left quadrant. The board is brittle overall, and all four corners show some losses, as well as lifting and delamination of the layers of board. The corners were consolidated in 2006. The paint appears to be in good condition. There is no varnish.

There is no ground layer or underdrawing, although there seems to be a blue paint sketch below the final colors, applied with a small brush 0.6 cm wide. The paint is a thinned oil paint, drained of excess medium to avoid leaving halo oil stains around the paint strokes. The brushwork is thin and open, with much of the support showing across the surface. Brushes up to 2.5 cm wide were used for the final colors.

1. Baragnon 1902, p. 98: "Si je n'étais peintre, je voudrais être médecin."
2. Joyant 1926, p. 132: "vaticinait, avec un accent de paysan beauceron, pour amuser la galerie et emplir la salle de bruit, pérorant sur choses n'ayant aucun rapport avec l'audacieux travail qu'il accomplissait dans un ventre ouvert, au milieu d'un soleil de pincés." Joyant was a former schoolmate and longtime supporter of Lautrec, and wrote the first full account of the artist's career.
3. Tapié de Céleyran 1922, p. 355; translation from London–Paris 1991–92, p. 156.
4. Dortu 1971 lists at least 46 sketches, D D3.154–185b, D3.187–191, D3.195a–b, D3.197, D3.198, and S.D.17–19.
5. Baragnon 1902, p. 100; Joyant 1926, p. 271.
6. See Murray 1991, p. 254; and the letter from Lautrec to his mother, dated [Sept. 1891], in which he notes, "as for my uncle and Gabriel, they've gone back to Rivaude until the 5th, at which time the courses are to begin. Gabriel will live in a hotel, in the Latin Quarter" (Schimmel 1991, p. 152, letter 205).
7. See Emery and Emery 2006, p. 88, as well as numerous letters in the Clark's curatorial file. Anne Roquebert suggests that the gray oval shape just under the patient's jaw is a hole that might support the reading of a tracheotomy to open the windpipe, but even this shape is difficult to read with certainty. See London–Paris 1991–92, p. 158.
8. This practice is described in the biography at [www.medarus.org/Medecins/MedecinsTextes/pean.html](http://www.medarus.org/Medecins/MedecinsTextes/pean.html) (accessed 6 Dec. 2011).
9. D P385.
10. *Head of a Woman* (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.1430).
11. RSC Diary, 9 Mar. 1934.
12. RSC Diary, 23 May 1940. Although Clark regularly made similar comments to dealers, presumably as a simple way of declining a purchase, it seems significant that he mentioned this work, particularly as this was just a few months after he had bought Lautrec's *Jane Avril* (cat. 331), a somewhat more finished and more characteristic work.

**331 | Jane Avril** c. 1891–92

Oil on laminate cardboard, mounted on panel, 63.2 x 42.2 cm  
 Upper left: HTL [monogram]  
 1955.566

This is one of a number of Toulouse-Lautrec's portraits of Jane Avril (1868–1943), a dancer who made her name at the Moulin Rouge dance hall and *café-concert*. By 1891–92, when this work was painted, Lautrec had become a regular visitor to several of the nightspots in his Montmartre neighborhood. Having earlier posed models such as Carmen Gaudin and Suzanne Valadon as representatives of the clientele in such establishments (see *Waiting* [cat. 329]), and then collaborated with proprietors such as Aristide Bruant to decorate and promote their venues, Lautrec went on to depict some of the most prominent performers. Among these, he had perhaps the most sustained friendship with Jane Avril, whom he probably met about 1890.

Avril was born Jeanne Louise Beaudon, the illegitimate daughter of a French mother, Léontine Clarisse Beaudon, known as Élise, and an Italian father, Luigi Defant, who styled himself the "marquis de Font."<sup>1</sup> De Font abandoned the family when Jeanne was about two, and after suffering from poverty and abuse, Jeanne left home in her teens. At about this time, she was diagnosed with a neurological disorder, chorea, that causes involuntary muscle movements, and sought treatment in 1882 from the well-known neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière in Paris. According to her memoirs, at a certain point during her two-year stay at the hospital, she attended a ball and there discovered that dancing effectively cured her symptoms.<sup>2</sup> After leaving the hospital in 1884, she visited a public dance-hall the following year and, she wrote, "from that wonderful evening dates my vocation as a dancer, my only raison d'être from then on."<sup>3</sup> A few years later she was engaged by the Moulin Rouge, which opened in 1889, as both a quadrille dancer and a solo performer. Lautrec may have first represented her as a small secondary figure in a painting of 1891–92, *La Goulue: Resting Between Two Sets of the Waltz* (location unknown),<sup>4</sup> a work that centers on another Moulin Rouge star, La Goulue ("the Glutton," the stage name of Louise Weber). Although the figure in the right