



**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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ill. on cover; Venturi 1939, vol. 1, ill. opp. p. 112; New York 1941b, p. 129; Terrasse 1941, pl. 47; Florisoone 1942, p. 34, ill.; Zahar 1948, fig. 69; Fox 1951, ill. on cover; Catinat 1952, p. 84, ill.; Fox 1953, pl. 1; Kooning 1956, p. 44, ill.; Fosca 1961, p. 247, ill.; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 125, ill.; Daulte 1964, p. 81, ill.; Vincent 1966, p. 257, fig. 15; Reiff 1968, ill. on frontispiece; Cabanne 1970, p. 208, ill.; probably Manet 1979, p. 249; White 1984, pp. 212–13, 245, ill.; Platschek 1985, p. 20, ill.; Sutton 1985, p. 243, ill.; Bonafoux 1986, p. 169, ill.; Keller 1987, pl. 2; Kelly and Lucie-Smith 1987, p. 18, ill.; Denvir 1993, p. 222, ill.; Distel 1993, pp. 112–13, ill.; Brisbane–Melbourne–Sydney 1994–95, p. 144, ill.; Booth 1996, p. 167, ill.; Jeromack 1996, p. 83, ill.; Marmor and Ravin 1997, p. 39, fig. 3-1; Néret 2001, p. 224, ill.; Cros 2003, pp. 150, 152, ill.; Dauberville and Dauberville 2007–10, vol. 3, pp. 378–79, no. 2353, ill.; Goetz 2009, pp. 106–7, ill.; Distel 2009, p. 298, fig. 271.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is an unlined moderate-weight fabric (22 threads/cm), with a stamp on the reverse of the Paris colorman Hardy-Alan. There are slight tide lines on the lower third of the reverse, probably from some contact with water, possibly before the picture was painted. The five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher is original, and the keys are secured in place with small nails. The age cracks run primarily in a horizontal direction. There is wrinkling paint found in many colors, and in many of the same sites, an oozing substrate is seen under low magnification. Some of this disturbed paint in the beard, hat, and tie has exposed the ground layer. A lichen-like condition seen on the face may relate to the artist reworking the image by softening the paint locally with diluent, probably turpentine. The slight abrasion and older resin residues indicate the picture was cleaned at least once in its lifetime. Only the thinnest of varnish layers, applied while the image was framed, is present. In ultraviolet light, scattered residues of an earlier varnish can be seen in the wrinkles of the hat and in the background texture. There may also be a thin older varnish layer remaining on the coat. Old frame abrasion in some places has left a powdery deposit from the frame. The surface reflectance is matte, especially along the outer perimeter of 1.3 cm. Changes in the shirt and hat brim are also visible in reflected light.

The ground is a commercially applied pale gray layer. No underdrawing or paint sketch was seen using either infrared reflectography or microscopic viewing, although changes in the paint layer were noticed in the shoulder line, the hat outline, and where the hat brim once dipped over the proper right brow. A black charcoal line runs along the top fold-over edge. The paint is applied in soft thin layers. There are a few very low impastos, the highest being the eye highlight. The sharp brown signature, possibly ink, is not consistent with the painted surface and may have been applied later.

1. Julie Manet diary entry for 9 August 1899, in Manet 1979, p. 249: “Il termine un portrait de lui qui est très joli, il

s’était d’abord fait un peu dur et trop ridé; nous avons exigé qu’il supprimât quelque rides et maintenant c’est plus lui. ‘Il me semble que c’est assez ces yeux de veau,’ dit-il.”

2. Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, p. 230.
3. See photographs reproduced in White 1984, pp. 208, 213, and Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, p. 329.
4. For discussion of the circumstances of this self-portrait, see also Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, p. 230.
5. Information in the Clark’s curatorial file, “from Mr. May, Institute, Aug. 1959,” gives the provenance as “Charles Farrel, Paris (until 1914; sold to May); George May (1914–1926; sold to Durand-Ruel).” This cannot be verified, and, given the evidence that it was in Renoir’s studio (see *L’Atelier de Renoir* 1931, vol. 1, pl. 59, no. 182) and owned by Pierre Renoir in 1935, it is probably incorrect.

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Oil on canvas, 42.2 x 33.8 cm

Upper right: Renoir. 04.

1955.600

In the late summer of 1901, Renoir visited Fontainebleau to fulfill a commission to paint the portraits of Suzanne and Mathilde Adler, fiancées of Gaston and Joseph (Josse) Bernheim, the proprietors of the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris.<sup>1</sup> There he met a young painter, Valentine Fray, a distant relative of the Adlers, whose portrait he painted the same year, presumably during his stay at Fontainebleau; wearing an elaborate dress, she is posing against a loosely brushed green background that suggests an open-air setting (Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow).<sup>2</sup> Three years later, he painted the present portrait of her young son Jacques, for a commission of only three hundred francs, a very low sum for Renoir’s work at this date. The portrait can be seen on the wall in a photograph of Valentine and her children taken around 1909.<sup>3</sup> Fray, seen at the piano in this photograph, later became a concert pianist; he worked with George Gershwin, and in 1947 became the host of one of the first classical music series on radio.<sup>4</sup>

Jacques Fray seems to be about a year old at the time the portrait was painted; the image closely resembles the type of picture that Renoir had recently executed of his own third son Claude (Coco), born in August 1901. The young Jacques is shown playing with



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toy birds, clasping one in his hand while another stands on the table in front of him with a third lying overturned beside it—a witty detail that hints at the characteristically limited attention span of a child of this age.

The baby's dress is handled in a fluent impasto, while the remainder of the canvas is freely but more thinly brushed. The warm hues of his face and hair are set off against the soft green background, but, as in the later 1890s, blue is not used to model the figure. At the same time, the black ribbons on the child's sleeves, set boldly against the whites of the garment, emphasize Renoir's return to the use of black as a key element in his palette. JH

**PROVENANCE** Valentine Fray, Paris (d. 1939); Jacques Fray, Paris, her son, by descent (from 1939); [Carroll Carstairs, New York, sold to Durand-Ruel, 1 May 1940]; [Durand-Ruel, Paris and New York, sold to Clark, 28 May 1940]; Robert Sterling Clark (1940–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Paris 1933a, no. 110, as *Enfant écrivant*; Paris 1936a, no. 141, ill., as *Portrait d'Enfant*, lent by Valentine

Fray; Williamstown 1956b, no. 153, pl. 18; New York 1967, no. 44; Cincinnati 1977, ill.; Williamstown 1996–97, pp. 61, 68–69, ill. Madrid 2010–11, pp. 126–27, no. 31, ill.

**REFERENCES** Barnes and de Mazia 1935, pp. 318, 425, 464, no. 230, ill.; Roger-Marx 1937, p. 165, ill.; Wilenski 1963, p. 344; Terrasse 1941, no. 43, ill.; Florisoone 1942, p. 64, ill.; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 115, ill.; Donald 1966, pp. 22–23, ill.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is an unlined, brittle, somewhat coarse canvas (19 threads/cm). Paint extends onto the right tacking margin, suggesting that the image was made prior to stretching. Secondary tack holes suggest that the picture has also been restretched. The five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher appears to be original and bears the stamp of Paris colorman Hardy-Alan. Narrow spacers 0.5 cm in width are attached to all but the left side as a framing aid; the attachment angle of the top spacer is causing a ridge in the painting. There is some staining on the canvas reverse, especially in the vertical direction, presumably from a varnish application after the cracks had formed. Age cracks run throughout the surface, and lifted mechanically induced cracks in the right background green were consolidated with warm gelatin in 2010. There are two coats of yellowed, natural resin varnish that have their own crack system, and there is no evidence of varnish removal. The ultraviolet light fluorescence is quite dense and splotchy in the lower third of the image. The varnish was slightly thinned in 2010, and the picture was varnished to even out the gloss. The vertical warp thread pattern is very visible in reflected light.

The ground is an off-white commercially prepared layer. There are small pits in the priming's surface from the original preparation. Although there may be a faint underdrawing, it is not readily detectable. The ground color can be seen through the thin paint film. The colors were applied wet-into-wet in a very sketchy manner. There are a few impastos in the white costume and the toy birds. The green background was clearly painted around the child's head, as seen by the direction of the paint strokes.

1. See Distel 1993, p. 117; Dauberville and Dauberville 2007–10, vol. 1, pp. 29–30.
2. See Donald 1966, pp. 22–23.
3. Reproduced in Donald 1966, p. 22.
4. Obituary notes from WQXR News, 1963, in the Clark's curatorial file.