



**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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Details:

TITLE PAGE: Camille Pissarro, *The Louvre from the Pont Neuf* (cat. 253)

OPPOSITE COPYRIGHT PAGE: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril* (cat. 331)

PRECEDING PAGE 474: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Onions* (cat. 280)

PAGES 890–91: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphisa* (cat. 3)

layer of old varnish was left on the hair, beard, jacket, and background areas due to some solvent sensitivity. Very few retouches appear under ultraviolet light. In 2005, remaining losses in the background and proper right eye were filled and inpainted. Flaking along the edges, caused by the adhesive tension of the paper tape, was consolidated.

The ground is a commercially applied pale gray layer, which shows through some of the costume and particularly the background areas. There may also be an artist-applied flesh tone laid in below the face colors, which is visible in thinner passages of the forehead. No underdrawing was detected, although there may be a thin blue paint sketch, still visible in the costume outlines. An incised line along the top edge and charcoal lines in the lower right, both drawn through the wet paint, suggest that the picture was squared up for stretching after it was painted. The wet-into-wet paint handling is very thick and vehicular in the face and hair, with slightly lower brushwork in the costume. The background paint is so thinned by dilution that it lacks body thickness. Colors used in the flesh were pre-blended on the palette; while colors in other areas, such as the mustache, were juxtaposed and blended on the picture surface.

1. Porcheron 1876; reprinted in Berson 1996, vol. 1, p. 103: “un portrait de l’auteur tout en hachures.”
2. Vollard 1938, pp. 184–5; translation from Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, p. 145.
3. See Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, p. 148.
4. See London–Paris–Boston 1985–86, pp. 12–13.
5. For further discussion, concluding that the Fogg canvas should indeed be regarded as a self-portrait, see Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, pp. 148, 289.
6. There is a handwritten receipt for this sale from Donop de Monchy to Rosenberg in the Rosenberg Archives. See The Paul Rosenberg Archives, a gift of Elaine and Alexandre Rosenberg, I.C.6.a., The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
7. Charles Moffett and Ruth Berson both identify no. 214 as a portrait of Victor Chocquet and no. 211 as an unlocated portrait owned by Chocquet, and suggest that the Clark self-portrait was exhibited but not listed in the catalogue. See Washington–San Francisco 1986, p. 164, and Berson 1996, vol. 2, p. 45, no. II-HC6. Colin Bailey, however, proposes no. 214 as the Clark picture and no. 211 as the portrait of Chocquet, citing such evidence as Rivière’s review, where the critic mentions both “a portrait of an old man and his own” (“un portrait de vieillard et le sien”), presumably referring to the portrait of Chocquet and to the self-portrait. See Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, pp. 145, 289n2, 289n14.

267 | Woman Crocheting c. 1875

Oil on canvas, 73.5 x 60.3 cm

Lower right: Renoir.

1955.603

A young woman sitting in a domestic interior is viewed in near profile, her attention focused on her crocheting; her figure is brightly lit from a light source—presumably a window—behind her right shoulder. Her long red-blond hair hangs loose, and she is humbly dressed in a plain skirt and a shift, which has slipped from her shoulder, baring her skin to the light. Her dress suggests that we should view her as a servant; the fireplace behind her, and the glass and vase placed on it, would appear to belong to a bourgeois household.

Images of women sewing were common in French genre painting in these years. Jean-François Millet, among others, had popularized the theme in his images of peasant interiors. Yet the associations of Renoir’s canvas are rather different. By placing the figure in a bourgeois interior, Renoir brings the figure emphatically within the realm of the art viewer rather than relegating her to the seemingly remote world of the rural peasant. We, the viewers, are invited to imagine that we are observing her unawares within this private space, which heightens the sexual charge of her undress. Yet this seeming informality is carefully staged; the detail of the chemise slipping from the model’s shoulder was a regular topos in mildly eroticized genre painting, notably in the work of Jean-Honoré Fragonard and Jean-Baptiste Greuze, and was repeated, in a more overtly erotic and voyeuristic way, in *Sleeping Girl* (see cat. 276).

It seems likely that the model who posed for the *Woman Crocheting* was Nini Lopez, who sat for many of Renoir’s paintings in the mid-1870s, including, it seems, *La Loge* (The Courtauld Gallery, London).¹ Georges Rivière, a close friend of Renoir in these years, noted that Nini modeled for many of his paintings between 1874 and 1880; she had “an admirable head of golden-blond hair” and was “the ideal model: punctual, serious, discreet,” though finally she disappointed her watchful mother by marrying a minor actor.² While she was modeling for Renoir, Rivière noted, the artist often depicted her as she sat sewing or reading in the corner of his studio, after a formal posing session. It seems likely that *Woman Crocheting* is the result of one of these occasions,



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though the model is posing here, just as she is in more formally conceived canvases, such as *La Loge*. The treatment of the figure makes it clear that this is a genre painting, not a portrait, and the fact that the same model posed as a servant here and in a fashionable evening gown in *La Loge* shows that both canvases should be analyzed in terms of the role that the female figure is asked to play, rather than as images of a specific individual. The features of the face, seen in shadow, are relatively generalized, and the focus is, rather, on the play of light across her shoulder and cheek and on her hair and her shift.

The lit flesh is painted with a full impasto, and var-

ied colors—yellows and blues, as well as pinks and reds—are introduced in the shadowed areas of her neck; the color in her hair, too, is richly varied, with yellows, oranges, and reds set against some darker hues that suggest the fall of shadow. Rich sweeps of white describe her chemise and the material that she is working, with loosely applied streaks of blue to suggest their folds. The rich impasto can be compared with *Woman Reading (La Liseuse)* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), another informal study of a half-length female figure painted around the same date, while the complex and very assertive color modulations in the flesh painting are comparable to *Study: Sunlight Effect of*

1875–76 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), the study of a nude posed out of doors, her skin dappled with the play of sunlight and shadow, for which Nini Lopez may again have posed; this was described by Albert Wolff when it was exhibited in 1876 as “an accumulation of decomposing flesh with patches of green and purple which suggest the state of total putrefaction in a corpse.”³

The treatment of the figure in *Woman Crocheting*, as in *Woman Reading* and *Study*, marks the extreme point of Renoir's rejection of conventional notions of tonal modeling, in favor of forms, lighting, and space suggested by modulations of color. Any conventional sense of contour, too, is abandoned; the figure's margins are suggested by contrasts of color and tone. The treatment of the face here makes a vivid contrast with *Marie-Thérèse Durand-Ruel Sewing* (cat. 283), a canvas of a similar subject painted about seven years later, where the silhouette of the face is sharply demarcated from the background.

Two other versions of this composition exist, both smaller and more sketchily treated than the present canvas; in one, the model is seen from the same angle with the chemise similarly placed, in the other nearly full-face with the chemise securely covering both shoulders.⁴ It is unclear whether the former acted as a study for the present canvas, or was a smaller and more informal replica.

Woman Crocheting holds a special place in the Clark's collection as the first Renoir Sterling Clark purchased. At the time that Clark bought the canvas in 1916, he was unsure of his commitment to the painting, so much so that he had the dealer sign an agreement to buy back the purchase if he was unsatisfied with it. Little did he realize that, rather than return the painting, he would go on to acquire more than thirty additional paintings by Renoir, eventually describing him as “perhaps the greatest [painter] that ever lived.”⁵ JH

PROVENANCE [Durand-Ruel, Paris, before 1881, transferred to Durand-Ruel, New York, 4 May 1888];⁶ [Durand-Ruel, New York, sold to Lambert, 1888]; Catholina Lambert, Paterson (1888–1916, his sale, American Art Association, New York, 22 Feb. 1916, no. 152, ill., as *Girl Knitting*, sold to Scott & Fowles); [Scott & Fowles, New York, sold to Clark, 16 Dec. 1916, as *Girl Knitting*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1916–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS New York 1946–47, no. 4, ill., as *Jeune femme cousant*; Williamstown 1956b, no. 144, pl. 9; Williamstown 1981a, no cat.; Williamstown 1996–97, pp. 12, 13, 27, 42–44, 48, ill.; Montgomery and others 2005–7, no cat.; Williams-

town–New York 2006–7, pp. 54–56, 253, 304, fig. 57; Madrid 2010–11, pp. 23, 56–58, 64, 82, 125.

REFERENCES Kooning 1956, p. 66; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 110, ill.; Tominaga 1969, p. 112, pl. 8; Daulte 1971, vol. 1, no. 154, ill.; Fezzi 1972, pp. 96–97, no. 177, ill. (French ed., p. 96, no. 173, ill.); Nakayama 1979, p. 13; Monneret 1989, p. 151, fig. 4; London–Paris–Baltimore 1992–93, p. 61, as *Girl Knitting*; Jeromack 1996, p. 84; San Diego–El Paso 2002–3, p. 39; Cahill 2005, p. 38, ill.; Sirna 2006, pp. 78–79, ill.; Soussloff 2006, pp. 38–39, ill.; Dauberville and Dauberville 2007–10, vol. 1, pp. 414–15, no. 390, ill.; London 2008, p. 33, fig. 17.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a moderate-weight fabric (22 threads/cm) with many irregular threads visible on the paint surface. The picture's glue/paste lining is a heavy double-weave bleached fabric (13 threads/cm) with some adhesive staining on the reverse. The lining took place with a cleaning in 1937, probably by Murray, through Durand-Ruel of New York. The stretcher is a five-member pine mortise-and-tenon frame. The tacking margins were partially preserved. There are scattered, branched, small aperture age cracks throughout, and old overpaint on the top and right edges, some extending 2.5 cm into the image. The painting was cleaned in 1980, and under ultraviolet light, a thin layer of the earlier varnish remains visible on the sitter's skirt, the fireplace, and other background areas. There are new retouches on the wrist, shoulder, and right edge.

The off-white ground, which barely covers the canvas threads, is visible in areas of the skirt and the background. On the X-radiograph, dense deposits of ground are caught in the canvas along the horizontal threads. The cusping distortions in the fabric may indicate that the picture was stretched prior to the ground application, suggesting that the artist may have prepared the support himself. No underdrawing or lower sketch was discovered, although there are indications of changes and possible reworking by the artist. Much of the paint is applied wet-into-wet, with very pronounced impastos and scumbles. The paint is especially thick in the sitter's hair and face. The face may have been reworked, possibly somewhat later, along with the hair near the top of the head. The X-radiograph shows some alteration in the bodice at the proper left shoulder, and the hair seems extended past the back of the head in a thinner outline. Areas of the skirt look blurred by solvent, as if the artist tried to alter the paint after it was applied. There are two round anomalies below the black paint in the upper area of the mantelpiece, and the items on the mantle may have been added later, as they were applied over dry paint. The upper left corner may have been reworked after the picture was varnished and may also contain an earlier signature, visible in low magnification as small red strokes below the upper paint layer. The only area of the picture that is solvent damaged is the signature in the lower right. This signature appears to be a later addition, as it seems to be floating on top of the varnish layers.



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1. Although François Daulte states that Renoir had two models named Nini in the 1870s, and that it was Nini “Gueule de Raie” who sat for *La Loge* (Daulte 1971, pp. 416–17, no. 116), the three firsthand accounts of his models in these years mention only one; it seems likely that this was Nini Lopez. See London 2008, p. 32.
2. Rivière 1921, pp. 65–66: “une admirable chevelure d’un blond doré et brillant”; “C’était le modèle idéal: ponctuelle, sérieuse, discrète.”
3. Wolff 1876; reprinted in Berson 1996, vol. 1, p. 110: “un amas de chairs en décomposition avec des taches vertes violacées qui dénotent l’état de complète putréfaction dans un cadavre!”
4. Daulte 1971, nos. 153, 155.
5. RSC Diary, 21 Jan. 1939.
6. According to the Durand-Ruel Archives, this painting was listed as *La tricoteuse* in the gallery’s stock in July 1881, but it must have been purchased earlier. It is possible that it was also the painting listed in the gallery’s stock in 1876 as *Jeune fille tricotant*, but this cannot be confirmed.

268 | Tama, the Japanese Dog c. 1876

Oil on canvas, 38.3 x 46.2 cm

Lower right: Renoir.

1955.597

Tama, a Japanese Chin, was brought back to France from Japan in 1873 by the celebrated collector Henri Cernuschi, who traveled through Japan with Renoir’s friend and supporter Théodore Duret. Both Manet, once, and Renoir, twice, painted Tama. In Manet’s canvas (fig. 268.1), the dog is standing, alert and poised above a Japanese doll that lies on the floor—a parody victim of this tiny hunter. By contrast, Renoir on both occasions depicted Tama sitting, in one facing the viewer (private collection),¹ and in the present canvas in half-profile, raising a paw in a seeming greeting or an appeal to the viewer.