



**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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Designed by Susan Marsh
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Bibliography edited by Sophia Wagner-Serrano
Index by Kathleen M. Friello
Proofread by June Cuffner
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TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine-weave twill linen, with a vertical warp (25 threads/cm) and horizontal weft (31 threads/cm). The painting has a glue lining onto a bleached, coarsely woven linen (13 x 22 threads/cm), probably dating from 1938, when Henri Helfer of Paris treated the picture. The painting is on a six-member stretcher and retains the artist's tacking margins. Occasionally erupting paint in the caftan suggests the reason the picture may have been lined. There are wandering, unconnected age cracks running primarily in a horizontal direction, the result of the uneven stresses induced by the twill fabric. There are corner stress cracks radiating down from the upper right corner. In general, the paint is in good condition. In 1994, a 1984 varnish layer was removed and a lower yellowed layer was thinned. The remaining old varnish has a slight ultraviolet light fluorescence throughout. There is minor inpainting at the edges, mostly covering old frame abrasion. In reflected light, the weave of the twill fabric is quite noticeable, especially the prominent horizontal weft threads. There is also a cluster of prominent vertical threads running through the left third of the picture. The surface has a matte reflectance, except for a few shinier brushstrokes.

The ground appears to be one thin pale gray layer. In a few areas, such as the neck of the robe, bare threads can be seen. The ground layer is visible throughout the image and is used as a base color for the sofa, flesh, and the front panels of the caftan. No underdrawing was detected, though there may be a cursory blue paint sketch. The paint is applied in a paste consistency, with brushstrokes skipping across the diagonal thread pattern. There are low to moderate height impastos throughout the image. The blue background color seems to be painted over a scant application of olive greens, browns, and darker blue strokes. Several colors look dry and crystalline under magnification, which may be the result of some additive, such as resin, in the paint. White hog's bristles are embedded in the surface.

1. See Wildenstein 1974–91, vol. 1, pp. 71–72.
2. See House 1986, pp. 47–59; Canberra–Perth 2001.
3. See Rivière 1921, p. 58; Vollard 1938, p. 196.
4. See Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, p. 127.
5. Daulte 1971, nos. 77 and 78.
6. See Tübingen 1996, p. 106; see also Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, p. 281n11.
7. See Reff 1976a, pp. 85–86.
8. See Ottawa–Chicago–Fort Worth 1997–98, pp. 127, 281.
9. It was a convention that the names of female sitters were indicated only by their initials in exhibition catalogues, even if their identity was widely known.
10. The painting was re-entered as part of Durand-Ruel's stock on 25 Aug. 1891, indicating that it had been purchased earlier.

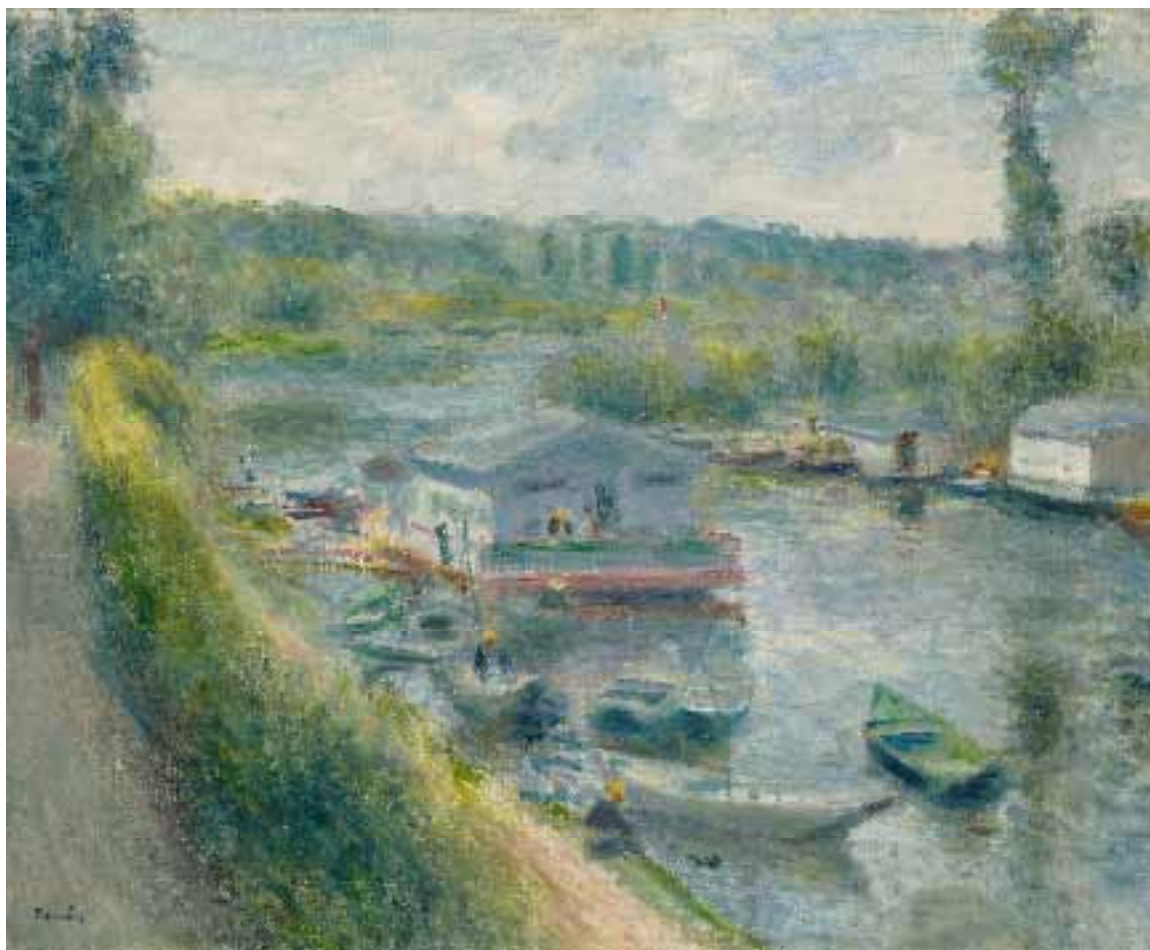
263 | Wash-House Boat at Bas-Meudon c. 1874

Oil on canvas, 50 x 61 cm

Lower left: Renoir.

1955.610

Wash-House Boat at Bas-Meudon is one of the most experimental and unexpected of Renoir's landscapes of the mid-1870s. It shows the branch of the River Seine that passes below the town of Meudon, about seven miles southwest of Paris. Although the setting appears unspoiled and rural, these wooded riverbanks were sited in the midst of a set of towns on the left bank of the Seine—Meudon, Bellevue, and Sèvres—that were increasingly being absorbed into the larger patterns of work and leisure of the capital. In *Wash-House Boat at Bas-Meudon* the view is downstream toward Sèvres, with Meudon itself out of sight to the left, and one of the islands in the Seine on the right. Meudon was famous as the site of one of Louis XIV's châteaux, very recently destroyed by the Germans during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71. Its terrace offered one of the most spectacular views over the city, and the château had been a key base for the government troops as they prepared to recapture Paris from the Communards in spring 1871.¹ Renoir, however, turned his back on both the view and the historical associations of the place, focusing instead on the nondescript boats on the river below; it is the informality of the subject and the lack of picturesqueness of the boats that mark out the modernity of the scene.



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The central position is occupied by the wash-house boat, used by poorer classes for washing clothes in the river water. Although the open side of the boat, where the clothes were washed, cannot be seen, the shape would have made the boat readily recognizable to its original viewers as a *lavoir*. No single feature is given any special emphasis by the way in which the subject is treated; all forms are lightly and softly brushed, and there is no particular focal point in the composition. The viewer's eye is not given a straightforward path of entry to the scene; from the top of a steep bank (there was no bridge at this point on the river), the eye may scan the scene either by following the line of the bank from bottom center, swinging in an arc to the left and around the background, or by jumping in irregular movements from boat to boat. The few figures, small and very summarily notated, create no special point of interest. The trees at top left and top right do frame the view, but below them, the inexplicit space at bottom left and the open margin at lower right, where the river flows uninterrupted out of the picture, leave the whole image particularly loosely structured.

The dominant play is of greens and blues, quite rich in hue, with the very light tone of the off-white canvas priming lending luminosity throughout. The

soft, deep reds and purples that appear particularly on the boats, as well as the little red accent on the flag above the wash-house, unobtrusively draw the viewer's attention to the central zone of the picture. The closely integrated harmonies of greens and blues, set off by this sequence of small warm accents, are reminiscent of the color schemes of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's later work, though Renoir's are more intense in coloring.

The subject and treatment of the picture make it a quintessential example of the Impressionist landscape. The everyday subject is treated in a way that gives no special significance to anything in it; everything is translated into delicate flecks and strokes of color that convey the painter's immediate visual experience of the scene without any sense of prior knowledge of what is depicted. And yet, by this very choice of subject and treatment, a canvas like this challenged the values for which conventional landscape painting stood in these years, as an expression of the permanent beauties of the French countryside.

The canvas cannot be firmly dated, but its softly brushed surface, thinly worked over an off-white priming whose presence is felt throughout the canvas, can be compared with *La Parisienne* of 1874 (fig. 261.1),

and with *Portrait of a Young Woman* (cat. 261). Thus, it can plausibly be dated to the summer of 1874.

A photograph of *Wash-house Boat at Bas-Meudon* appears among the first photographs made in the early 1890s by the dealer Durand-Ruel of paintings in his stock, but the canvas cannot be securely identified with any recorded in the Durand-Ruel stock books.² JH

PROVENANCE [Possibly Durand-Ruel, Paris];³ Anna Thompson (until 1909, sold to Durand-Ruel, New York, 17 Apr. 1909); [Durand-Ruel, New York, 1909–37, sold to Clark, 10 Apr. 1937]; Robert Sterling Clark (1937–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1956b, no. 139, pl. 4; Brisbane–Melbourne–Sydney 1994–95, p. 69, no. 9, ill.; Williamstown 1996–97, pp. 72, 75–76, ill.; Tokyo–Kyōto 2008, pp. 114–15, no. 35, ill.; Madrid 2010–11, pp. 48–50, no. 3, ill.

REFERENCES Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 134, ill.; Fezzi 1972, pp. 97–98, no. 186, ill. (French ed., p. 97, no. 182, ill.); Nakayama 1979, p. 17; Dauberville and Dauberville 2007–10, vol. 1, p. 195, no. 132, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine-weave canvas (approximately 25 threads/cm), glue- or paste-lined to a coarser fabric (13 threads/cm). The lack of stretcher creases points to an early lining date, probably between 1909 and 1937. The artist's tacking margins were retained, and the five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher may be original. There seems to be a small round mark in the upper right corner of the image, possibly from an old label. A small area of old disturbed paint in a yellow-green stroke appears in the foreground. Although there are a few age cracks scattered in the water and some slightly cupped, diagonal cracks in the sky, the paint film is in very good condition. Two layers of discolored natural resin were removed during a 1980 cleaning. There are very minor retouches in the sky, inpainting on the edges, and a long frame abrasion at the bottom. In reflected light, the new matte varnish has a soft luster, and the cracks in the upper third of the image are cupped forward slightly.

The ground is a commercially primed ivory-colored layer, visible between many areas of the paint. Although no underdrawing was detected, there may be a thin blue paint sketch visible on some of the boats. The paint layer is very thin and dry, and was further extended as it was applied to the canvas, as if the artist had a limited supply of paint. The colors were applied wet-into-wet, but in a dry, scumbled manner, with a few low impastos. In some areas the thin paint skips across the threads, emphasizing the weave pattern.

records list a Durand-Ruel photo no. 88 of this painting. This suggests that the photograph is quite old, and it in turn implies that Durand-Ruel may have owned the painting at an early date, prior to its entering the Thompson collection. See correspondence dated 24 April 2001, in the Clark's curatorial file. It is possible that this painting was deposited by the artist with Durand-Ruel on 8 Dec. 1888, deposit no. 6635, and purchased on 4 Oct. 1890, stock no. 659, titled *La Seine à Bas Meudon*, but information in the Durand-Ruel Archives, along with labels on the painting reverse, is inconclusive.

264 | Père Fournaise 1875

Oil on canvas, 56.2 x 47 cm

Right center: Renoir. 75.

1955-55

Alphonse Fournaise (1823–1905) was the proprietor of a restaurant and boat-rental business on an island in the River Seine at Chatou, nine miles west of Paris. Renoir, whose mother lived nearby at Louveciennes, may have frequented the place from the late 1860s onward,¹ and between 1875 and 1881 sited a number of his scenes of riverside recreation and boating at Fournaise's establishment, notably *Luncheon of the Boating Party* of 1880–81 (The Phillips Collection, Washington). The present portrait of Fournaise belongs to the first group of paintings that Renoir executed there, along with a dated portrait of Fournaise's daughter Alphonsine (*Woman Smiling*, 1875; Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand). Ambroise Vollard later recorded that Renoir told him that Fournaise had commissioned these two portraits to thank Renoir for bringing Fournaise many new clients.² It seems, too, that his first representation of luncheon on a terrace by the river, *Lunch at the Restaurant Fournaise (The Rowers' Lunch)* (The Art Institute of Chicago), dates from this summer;³ *Bridge at Chatou* (cat. 265) was also presumably painted around the same time.

Fournaise is posed, smoking a pipe, his left elbow on a café table, with two glasses of beer in front of him, suggesting that we have caught him in a moment of informal conviviality—a moment that we can, perhaps, imagine that we are sharing with him, though his attention is directed outside the picture, to our left, which might imply that he is in conversation with a third person. Wearing a dark waistcoat over his loose

1. See Baedeker 1874, p. 237.

2. See note 3 below.

3. Caroline Durand-Ruel Godfroy indicated that gallery