



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS  
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

**VOLUME ONE**

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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**PROVENANCE** [Jean Oppenheim, Paris, sold to Clark, 1 July 1938]; Robert Sterling Clark, 1938–55; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** None

**REFERENCES** None

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a white, lightweight hardwood panel, 0.5 cm thick, possibly lime, which has been stained dark. The grain runs horizontally, and only the top and bottom edges have reverse chamfers. The panel has a slightly twisted convex warp. Small age cracks throughout form a rectangular pattern typical of painted wood, and a group of radiating cracks in the upper left corner stems from framing pressure. An old series of gouges appears in the stand at the far right of the stage. The edges show frame abrasion, transferred gold leaf, and a small bit of wood from the frame rebate. Traction cracks that cover the upper third of the image may relate to the choice of pigment or medium for the dark passages. There is solvent abrasion in the thin brown details of the background, the feathers on the geese, the whips, and the horse's head. The painting may have been cleaned through Knoedler in 1949. The ultraviolet light fluorescence indicates that older varnish was only partially removed, leaving a thin layer in the background and corners, with an especially dense 2.5-cm band along the top edge. The present glossy varnish has yellowed. There are scratches in the coating in the far left background area. No retouching was seen.

The ground is a white layer, which contributes to the high key of the circus ring. There is a diagonal ridge of ground lying across the upper left background. A fairly simple but thorough graphite underdrawing lies below most of the image. Even to the unaided eye, drawing lines are visible for all the figures, animals, and props. Under infrared reflectography, the lines running beneath the red and thinly painted white details are enhanced. The background appears to have been painted first, with reserves left for each figure that penetrates into the darkness. Quick wet-into-wet strokes define the audience figures, applied in vehicular washes that barely cover the ground layer.

1. For more on Parisian circuses see Dérens, Fort, and Gunther 2002; and Phillip Dennis Cate, "The Cult of the Circus," in *Boston–New York 1991*, pp. 38–46.
2. Ossorio y Bernard 1883–84, p. 55: "procedimiento . . . ventaja a los ya conocidos en no necesitar barnices, gomas ni aceites para adquirir brillantez, siendo al mismo tiempo tan sencillo como económico."

## Barbour

French or American, 20th century

### 8 | *Woman Reading* c. 1910

Oil on millboard, 21.1 x 27 cm

Lower right: Barbour.

1955.638

Portraits of women reading were popular in France and elsewhere in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. This and the commonness of the surname "Barbour" have made it difficult to identify the origin of *Woman Reading*. Scholar Sandra G. Ludig has proposed the American illustrator Harold S. Barbour (1889–1961) as the most probable candidate for the authorship of this painting.<sup>1</sup> Barbour studied at the Arts Student League in New York City and began his career in Boston. He produced book illustrations, political cartoons, and, in the 1930s, murals and paintings for the Works Progress Administration of workers in Connecticut, where he had moved in 1929.<sup>2</sup> While the carefully delineated elements of *Woman Reading*, along with the figure's early twentieth-century costume, may suggest that it could be an early work by Harold Barbour, the signature on this painting is considerably different from the signatures on his known works of the 1930s, which are most often signed "H. S. Barbour" in all capital letters. The identification of the author of this work therefore remains uncertain. Moreover, the dimensions of the support are labeled on the reverse of the board and are consistent with the size of commercially manufactured millboard in France. This accounts for the work's inclusion in the present catalogue, although it does not necessarily mean that the artist was French.

This painting shows a woman reclining in a chaise longue in an enclosed garden. The green vegetation surrounding the manicured lawn creates a secluded spot. Here, the woman is able to relax in solitude. She leisurely reads a letter and smokes a cigarette. Smoke faintly rises from the glowing embers of her cigarette. The woman is completely absorbed by the words of her correspondent. Gathered lace covers her bosom and drapes from her three-quarter-length sleeves. The ruffles at the bottom of her long skirt spill off the seat and give a glimpse of her bright red stockings. Large palm fronds spring out of a blue pot by the woman's feet. Her hat and long brown gloves lie underneath the armrest of the chair. In the bottom right corner, a small



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terrier jumps up, trying to sniff at or catch a butterfly that is just out of reach.

Sterling Clark collected a significant number of pictures of women reading and writing letters as demonstrated by the exhibition *Between the Lines: Ladies and Letters at the Clark*.<sup>3</sup> Letter writing was considered an appropriate diversion for refined ladies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The letter adds an anecdotal element to Barbour's painting as it alludes to an unseen suitor, family member, or friend. The woman appears to read her letter calmly as would be proper for a woman of her position, seemingly unaware of her frisky pet who manifests an excitement she does not share. The woman acts with restraint, but her cigarette marks her as a modern woman. In the 1890s, cigarettes sexualized the female figure and smoking was seen as transgressive feminine behavior into the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> KA

**PROVENANCE** [James Graham & Sons, New York, sold to Clark, 28 Oct. 1942]; Robert Sterling Clark (1942–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** New York 1943b, no. 101; Williamstown 1977, no cat.; Williamstown 1982b, p. 19, no. 1, as by Barbour; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

**REFERENCES** None

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a commercially manufactured artist's millboard, 0.2 cm thick, with a slight convex warp. The reverse has an original brown paint layer and is marked "No. 3 27 X 21 -80" in black script. The lower left corner of the support is dented. Near the top edge, between the two palm fronds, is a starburst of scratches with some paint loss. Fine aperture age cracks run throughout, with traction cracks in the white areas. There is old frame abrasion on the lower edge, and a V-shaped deposit, perhaps a glue drip, above the signature. In 1982, grime was removed from the surface and the picture was revarnished. The present lower natural resin layer has separate cracks, and was applied by brush in a horizontal direction. This layer, which has a moderate fluorescence in ultraviolet light, has probably been on the picture since before 1942. Deposits of older grime and yellowed varnish in the hat flowers and white impastos suggest that a varnish layer was removed or thinned in an earlier cleaning. The right and left edges are retouched, and some of the varnish residues in the white dress have been glazed lighter to minimize their discoloration. In reflected light, the surface is very shiny and sparkly, emphasizing the brushwork.

The white commercial ground is comprised of two or three layers, finished to a smooth surface. There was no underdrawing detected in infrared light, although there may be a brown ink sketch or dark imprimatura layer in some areas. This is visible in the dog's outline, although the dog, hat, and gloves were added after the greens had been laid in. There is also a reddish tone under the dress. Examination in infrared reflectography shows a circular pattern in the green surrounding the hand holding the letter. There are also two vertical strokes above the woman's knees and adjustments



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of the background around the face and hands, indicating changes by the artist in the paint layer. There may be some subtraction of paint behind the sitter's head and the chaise, also part of an alteration by the artist. The wet-into-wet paint application is generally very fluid, except in the dress and hat, where the brushstrokes are stiff and short to imitate the folds and ruffles in the crisp fabric. Some of the green passages are thin enough to allow visibility of the ground layer. The red signature appears to float on the earlier varnish layer, and may be slightly retouched.

1. Williamstown 1982b, p. 19.
2. Information and a number of illustrations of his WPA paintings can be found through the Connecticut State Library at <http://wpa.cslib.org/index.php/473/barbour-harold/> (accessed 6 Dec. 2011). The Haddam Historical Society in Connecticut holds the Harold Barbour collection, which contains political cartoons, illustrations, sketches, fiction and non-fiction writings, woodblock prints, and photographs.
3. Williamstown 1982b.
4. Mitchell 1991.

## E. Baré

French, active 19th century

### 9 | The Tuileries Gardens After 1883

Oil on panel, 22.1 x 16 cm

Lower right: E. BARÉ

1955.639

This painting shows men, women, and children walking along the paths of the eastern end of the Tuileries Gardens. The Louvre stretches across the horizon behind them, dividing the picture into two halves. The Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel stands directly in front of the Louvre and acts as a gateway into the garden below. Above the Louvre, fluffy white clouds float in the blue sky. The foliage of a tree fills the upper left corner and two women sit on chairs beneath it. One of the woman, wearing clothing typical of a nurse, holds a baby; an empty chair in front of them seems to await a woman in a pink dress who is walking in their direction. This woman passes closest to the viewer, but her profile does not provide distinct facial features. Behind her, many other figures also take advantage of a lovely day in the park. Though none of their faces is identifiable, men and women of various ages stroll at their leisure. To the right, another nurse leads a small child and pushes a baby carriage. An older gentleman with a gray mustache holds the hand of a schoolboy as they walk toward the viewer. A military figure wears a green uniform with red epaulettes and marches purposefully forward. A wide range of social types has descended upon the garden, but none of them visibly interacts with another.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the artist, although he seems to have been active in the latter half of the nineteenth century. There is another work clearly by the same hand, called *Strollers in a Parisian Park* (private collection), that is remarkably similar to *The Tuileries Gardens* and has been attributed to E. Baré.<sup>1</sup> *Strollers in a Parisian Park* is on a wider panel than the Clark painting and shows an expanded view of the Louvre and garden. The woman in pink and the two women sitting in chairs are in the same positions in both paintings. The rest of the figures are different, as if these women were frozen in place while the rest of the world passed them by. The characteristics of the signature on both *The Tuileries Gardens* and *Strollers in a Parisian Park*, in which the first letter of the last