



**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,
Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley,
Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
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Designed by Susan Marsh
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Proofread by June Cuffner
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EXHIBITIONS Lille 2011–12, pp. 264–65, no. 189, ill.

REFERENCES HARRISSE 1898, p. 141, no. 608, as (*Troisième*) *Scène de voleurs*; Marmottan 1913, pp. 105–6, 176; Mabille de Poncheville 1931, p. 125; Hallam 1979, pp. 81–82.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined coarse canvas with a weave of 13 x 16 threads per cm. The original stretcher is a five-member mortise-and-tenon design with short tenons and a vertical crossbar. The lower stretcher bar is rolled forward slightly, causing dishing in the surface. Stretcher creases have begun to form where the canvas rests against the bars. The slight vertical undulations across the surface may also be the result of imperfect and uneven tension caused by the stretcher. Age cracks, some with cupping, can be detected in the surface, along with secured areas of old overlapped paint. The ground looks brittle, with many losses around the fold-over edges. The painting may have been cleaned just before the 2007 purchase, although there are scattered yellow natural resin residues. There are a few cotton fibers stuck in the varnish and retouches are visible below the desk and along the lower edge.

The ground is an off-white color comprised of several layers, which provides a smooth surface. The ground seems to be applied over a thicker than normal glue layer, which may be responsible for the cupped cracks on the surface. The upper ground layer may have a slight vertical combing imitative of laid paper. Dark charcoal underdrawing lines are visible around the edges of forms in low magnification, and some of these lines are faintly visible in infrared. The only change noted was in the upper right window, where the horizontal muntin was raised 0.6 cm. There may be a warm brown imprimatura or sketch layer in the figural portion of the image. The paint was applied in a precise manner, using a fluid-consistency paint, with low rounded impastos and small dot highlights, all applied wet-into-wet. The heavy white border was painted after the image was completed. Dark sable brush hairs were found embedded in the paint. Some of the title lettering looks redone, as the corrected forms, now covered in white, are visible as shadows between the final letters.

1. Although the pendant grisaille has not been located, the Gillet sale catalogue, Drouot 1919, p. 8, indicates that it is inscribed with this title in the same manner as the Clark painting.
2. HARRISSE 1898, p. 79, nos. 27–28.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 129, no. 499. For a reproduction of this picture, see Lille 2011–12, p. 265, fig. 2.
4. Hallam 1979, p. 81.
5. “Ces scènes de voleurs sont très bien rendues. Quant à l’expression et à la composition, la couleur ne satisfait pas autant,” *Lettres impartiales sur les expositions de l’an XIII par un amateur* (Paris, 1804). See Deloynes Collection, vol. 31, no. 876, letter XXXII, p. 12; “Les scènes

de voleurs, no. 45, séduisent par les traits de vérité et de composition,” *Critique raisonnée des tableaux du Salon. Dialogue entre Pasquino, voyageur Romain, et Scapin* (Paris, 1804). See Deloynes Collection, vol. 31, no. 878, p. 12.

6. HARRISSE 1898, p. 182, nos. 1150–53.
7. *Disturbers of Domestic Happiness* (The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Sessler 44).
8. Franconi and Camel 1813, p. 14: “Ici les auteurs ont suivi fidèlement les tableaux de M. Boilly”; see also Marmottan 1913, pp. 135–36.
9. Franconi and Camel 1813, p. 14: “Conclusion. Les brigands sont arrêtés. Mais quelle est l’indignation de M. d’Armincourt en reconnaissant parmi eux l’infame Glatz?”

Giovanni Boldini

Italian, 1842–1931

21 | *Guitar Player* 1872

Oil on canvas, 41.6 x 34.4 cm

Lower left: Boldini / 73

1955.651

In November 1871, just a few weeks after arriving in Paris, Boldini wrote to a close friend, Cristiano Banti, “I have taken up with Goupil . . . with him it’s impossible [for artists] to be unknown.”¹ Adolphe Goupil was a prominent dealer and publisher who represented artists including Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), Ernest Meissonier (1815–1891), and Mariano Fortuny (1838–1874). Boldini clearly chose to work with Goupil in hopes that he would become as successful as those artists were. Several months later, in fact, the dealer purchased and then sold two of the first paintings Boldini produced in his new home, and not long afterward *Guitar Player* similarly passed through Goupil’s hands.² The painting’s small size, detailed handling, and emphasis on picturesque setting and costumes, in emulating qualities found in the work of several of the dealer’s other artists, were clearly designed to appeal to the same sort of clientele that avidly collected the more established artists’ output.

More specifically, Boldini in the *Guitar Player* seems to echo the work of Fortuny. The “Spanish” subject itself is one that Boldini rarely treated, while Fortuny, who was Spanish, often depicted figures like



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the toreador and the mantilla-clad young woman seen in the present work (fig. 21.1). Moreover, in 1872, Boldini had not yet traveled to Spain—he would not do so until 1889—so his painting must have been composed in the studio and based on costumed models, studio props, and perhaps the example of other paintings, rather than on an observed scene. Boldini painted another work at about the same date, *Couple in Spanish Costume with Two Parrots* (c. 1872–73, Collezioni d'Arte di Banca Carige, Genoa),³ which features essentially the same two figures, although the toreador's costume was changed from green to golden brown and the setting is slightly different, while the woman's pink dress trimmed with black lace remained the

same. The close similarities between the two paintings, as well as the slight differences introduced no doubt for the sake of variety, further underscore their status as studio compositions.

The date clearly inscribed on *Guitar Player*, “73,” presents a puzzle. The history of the painting can be definitively traced to its initial sale to Goupil in May 1872 thanks to an inscription on the back of the stretcher that reads “BV / 307[. . .].” The letters denote the dealer Boussod, Valadon & Cie., the firm that succeeded Goupil & Cie. in 1884, while the number corresponds to the stock number 30759 under which this painting appeared in the Goupil / Boussod, Valadon stock books in 1912. In this entry in the stock book, the



Fig. 21.1. Mariano Fortuny (Spanish, 1838–1874), *Toreador*, 1869. Gouache with pen and ink on white wove paper. 25.2 x 17.6 cm. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts (1955, 1918)

painting is titled *La Sérénade au Toréador* (Serenading the Toreador) and is noted as having a former stock number of 6591—a number that corresponds precisely to the initial sale from Boldini to Goupil in 1872. In the 1912 entry, the painting is further noted as being “dated 73,” perhaps already an acknowledgment that the inscribed date did not match what must have been its date of execution. Finally, because Goupil quickly sold the *Guitar Player* to the American dealer Charles F. Haseltine in June 1872, it is unlikely that Boldini would have had a chance to revise his work the following year, and thus his reasons for dating it 1873 remain unclear. SL

PROVENANCE The artist, sold to Goupil, 28 May 1872, as *Une femme pinçant de la guitare*; [Goupil, Paris, sold to Haseltine, 10 June 1872];⁴ Charles F. Haseltine, Philadelphia (from 1872); F.C. Lawrance, Pau, his private sale, 17–20 Dec. 1912, no. 245, as *La Sérénade au Toréador*, sold to Bousod, Valadon; [Bousod, Valadon, Paris, 1/3 share, jointly owned with Michel Knoedler and Arthur Tooth, 1912–13, sold to Jackson, 4 Jan. 1913];⁵ Edwin E. Jackson (from 1913); Arthur W. Bingham Jr., sold to Knoedler, 1929; [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 31 Dec. 1929]; Robert Sterling Clark (1929–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown–Hartford 1974, p. 31 no. 11, ill.; Padua–Rome 2005, pp. 126–27, no. 35, ill., as *Serenata*; Ferrara–Williamstown 2009–10, pp. 12, 32, 95, 202–3, 216–17, no. 9, ill.

REFERENCES Evans and Evans 1977, p. 154, ill.; Williamstown 1982d, p. 79; Doria 2000, vol. 1, no. 54, ill., vol. 2, pl. 54, as *Suonatrice di chitarra in taverna*; Dini and Dini 2002, vol. 1, pp. 156, 257, vol. 2, p. 42, vol. 3, pp. 91–92, no. 145, ill.; Panconi 2002, p. 146, ill., as *Torero e suonatrice di chitarra*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined canvas of quite fine weave (25 warp and 31 weft threads/cm), on a five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The canvas is becoming brittle, especially along the fold-over edges. The reverse has darkened, with varnish stains along the crack locations from a prior cleaning. Paint on the lower right and bottom tacking margins suggests that the painting was begun prior to being stretched, then completed after it was tacked to the present stretcher, as the final colors are different from those seen on the tacking margins. Cupped age cracks occur primarily in the upper quarter of the picture, although a few are found in the lower half of the canvas. Corner stress cracks are beginning to form in the upper left corner, and the upper stretcher bar has formed a crease. Small losses were noted in the lower right corner and along the left edge. An old filled scratch occurs through the stretcher-base of the furniture in the upper left quadrant, and another retouched vertical scratch lies below the bench of the guitar player. The thin natural resin coating fluoresces slightly in ultraviolet light. Slightly heavier deposits along the edges may be residual varnish from a previous coating. In 2005, grime was cleaned from the surface, and small areas of lifted paint on the right edge were set down.

The ground is a commercially applied medium-gray color. No underdrawing was discovered, although changes in the paint were seen in several areas. In the lower right corner and along the tacking margin there was originally a brighter color rectangle below the present floor. And a shift in design was seen where a tile border found on the left was dropped from the right side of the composition. There may be a light brown sketch in some areas, as seen below the furniture. The artist used a combination of opaque and transparent colors, all applied directly, in a variety of brushwork techniques. The costumes were done with quick, loose strokes and some sgraffito work, while the furniture and floor areas were handled in a more restrained manner.

1. Giovanni Boldini to Cristiano Banti, 17 [Nov.] 1871, in Dini and Dini 2002, vol. 2, p. 38: “Ho preso Goupil . . . impossibile con lui essere sconosciuti.”
2. For a list of the works by Boldini in the Goupil records, see Ferrara–Williamstown 2009–10, pp. 215–18.
3. DD 147.
4. See Goupil Stock Books, book 5, p. 236, no. 6591.
5. See Goupil Stock Books, book 15, p. 292, no. 30759.