



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

VOLUME ONE

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With an essay by Richard Rand
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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

Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute is published with the assistance of the Getty Foundation and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The Getty Foundation



ART WORKS.
arts.gov

Produced by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267
www.clarkart.edu

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Production by The Production Department,
Whately, Massachusetts
Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

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Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040
www.yalebooks.com/art

Printed and bound in Italy
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

Nineteenth-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / 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, Fronia E. Wissman.

volumes cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-935998-09-9 (clark hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-300-17965-1 (yale hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Painting, European—19th century—Catalogs. 2. Painting—Massachusetts—Williamstown—Catalogs. 3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—Catalogs. I. Lees, Sarah, editor of compilation. II. Rand, Richard. III. Webber, Sandra L. IV. Title. V. Title: 19th-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

ND457.S74 2012

759.9409'0340747441—dc23

2012030510

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lends the nude an air of mystery. The blue hue of the cloth is an odd choice; its color marks it and by extension the bather as interlopers in this rocky setting. The figure may be meticulously copied from nature, but this woman is not integral with her environs. If nothing more can be said about it, the blue drapery, unsettlingly suggestive of the color traditionally worn by the Virgin Mary, announces *Seated Nude* as concocted and artificial. It makes us look again at Bouguereau's skill as a painter. FEW

PROVENANCE The artist, sold to Boussod, Valadon, 15 Nov. 1884; [Boussod, Valadon, Paris, sold to Olry, 27 May 1885]; probably Jacques Olry, Paris, from 1885;⁷ [Galerie Lorenceau, Paris, sold to Clark, 29 May 1938]; Robert Sterling Clark (1938–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1959b, ill.; Williamstown 1985b, no cat.; Montreal 1990, p. 199, ill.; London 1997, pp. 90, 157, no. 58, pl. 107.

REFERENCES Vachon 1900, p. 155; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 5, ill.; Harding 1979, p. 6, ill.; Zeiger 1995, ill. on cover; Wissman 1996, pp. 84, 86, pl. 54; Cahill 2005, p. 56, ill.; Nehamas 2007, p. 25, fig. 15; Bartoli 2010, vol. 2, pp. 225–26, no. 1884.08, pl. 175.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a very finely woven linen (22 threads/cm). The picture remained unlined until 1978 when it was wax-resin lined to lightweight linen, to hold down severe and extensive cupped cracks, crossbar stretcher creases, and flaking. A series of concentric crack networks mar the surface, some formed from handling the picture by its crossbars. A thick layer of yellowed varnish was removed from the painting in 1978, and there had been at least one previous cleaning and revarnishing. At that time the original six-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher was replaced with a five-member redwood ICA spring tension design, with a single horizontal metal crossbar. Due to returned cupping, the picture was relined in 1996 by removing the wax lining and mounting the painting to a thin rigid sheet of G-10 (resin-embedded fiberglass) using the adhesive Beva 371. A lightweight polyester gauze was used as a release interleaf fabric. A layer of linen was attached to the stretcher for extra support before the mounted painting was restretched using the original tacking margins. Due to solvent sensitivity of the blacks and browns, some original varnish was left on the background passages. This is visible in ultraviolet light, where the cleaning was stopped in squared-off edges around the figure. The paint layer is in quite good condition, with a retouched old scratch or gouge in the shadow to the right of the figure's thigh and very minor retouches in the background above the figure's head. The right edge may have reworking by the artist. The cupping is still slightly visible, but the paint appears to be stable.

There are two ground layers, the lower being a commercially applied gray layer extending onto the tacking margins. The upper, artist-applied layer is pale pink, which is visible under the image, especially beneath the drapery and in a deposit along the lower edge. Light, single, underdrawing lines, possibly charcoal, on the face, neck, hands, and drapery are detectable in infrared reflectography. The paint layer follows the drawn layout very closely, with no visible alterations. The paint layer is very smooth and thinly applied in blended vehicular brushwork, with no real impastos. Scumbles were used to indicate sand and rock highlights.

1. B 1879.02, 1884.01, 1880.02, and 1888.02.
2. Vachon 1900, pp. 132–33: "L'Antiquité montre quelle source inépuisable d'inspirations variées est la nature. Avec des éléments relativement peu nombreux—une tête, un buste, des bras, un torse, des jambes, un ventre—combien il a été fait des chefs-d'oeuvre! Alors, pourquoi aller chercher autre chose à peindre ou à sculpter?"
3. Beckwith 1890, p. 262.
4. B 1884.07.
5. Paris–Lyon 1984–85, pp. 70–71.
6. For examples, see B 1879.14 and 1884.07.
7. See Goupil Stock Books, book 11, p. 117, no. 17227.

Cyprien-Eugène Boulet

French, 1877–1972

35 | Parisian Woman (La Parisienne) 1930s

Oil on canvas, 65.1 x 54.3 cm

Lower right: Cyprien. Boulet

1955.660

Throughout the course of their collecting, the Clarks were drawn to decorative pictures of appealing ladies such as this one, which Sterling Clark described as a "charming half length" when he and Francine first saw the painting at the Wildenstein Gallery in New York. The exhibition in which it appeared was devoted to contemporary French art of the most traditional sort, which Mr. Clark deemed "credible" with "little in eccentrics."¹ The couple immediately bought the painting for a rather modest sum.

Cyprien Boulet, the painter of *Parisian Woman*, is not well known today, but he was a rather popular artist in France during the first decades of the twentieth century.² Boulet trained in Paris with the conservative painters Jean-Paul Laurens (1838–1921), Raphaël



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Collin (1850–1916), and Fernand Cormon (1845–1924) beginning in the 1890s. Having been schooled successfully in the most traditional manner of the French academy, he was recognized in turn by its members and received a number of awards, including a gold medal at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1937. There is little evidence that Boulet was much influenced by the more progressive tendencies of the avant-garde artists of his era. Boulet's paintings never became really fashionable in the United States, although a single (and small) monographic exhibition of his work was mounted at Arthur U. Newton Galleries in New York in 1947.³ Cyprien Boulet executed genre or landscape paintings, such as *The Return of the Herd* (1913; location unknown), that recall the work of the Barbizon painters, and also dabbled at still-life painting. He specialized in portraiture, most often of women. He painted numerous members of the French aristocracy,

as well as politicians and their spouses, including the wife of the French President Vincent Auriol. Boulet also portrayed some of the more popular French actresses and dancers of the day.

This painting of an unknown woman is notable for the charming and pleasant demeanor of the sitter. It harkens back to eighteenth-century British portraits by the likes of Sir Joshua Reynolds or Thomas Lawrence in its rather forthright presentation of the sitter, as well as in her vaguely historical-appearing outfit. It was painted with rather broad and loose brushstrokes that are especially apparent along the upper edges of the woman's pale yellow bonnet. The overall blue tonality of the picture is punctuated by the sitter's red lips and vividly rouged cheeks, as well as by the touches of rose pigment along the lower edges of her dress and fan, and by the long black gloves the woman wears. Although it is difficult to assign a date to this

canvas based on either style or costume, circumstantial evidence indicates that it was likely painted in the 1930s.⁴ KP

PROVENANCE [Wildenstein, New York, sold to Clark, 14 June 1940]; Robert Sterling Clark (1940–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS New York 1940c, p. 17, no. 6, ill., as *A Parisian*.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a good quality, coarsely woven, pre-primed linen (13 threads/cm). The painting is unlined and is sparsely tacked to an inexpensive, five-member pine strainer, with nailed, half-lapped corner joins. The canvas is held properly taut, despite the immobility of the strainer. There is minor frame abrasion along the left and right edges. There are no cracks except those along the fold-over edges. The surface sheen is primarily matte, except in areas of locally applied varnish. The coating is a thin, patchy layer, apparently applied while the picture was framed.

The ground is a commercially applied off-white layer, thin enough to allow the canvas weave to be prominent. There is no detectable underdrawing or paint sketch below the visible paint layer, although there may be a grayish layer below the flesh color. The paint was directly and quickly applied in a paste consistency, wet-into-wet, using large brushes. Wide-bristle brushstrokes are visible even in the face.

1. RSC diary, 12 May 1940, pp. 2–3.
2. Most sources still give his year of death as 1927 rather than 1972, but this seems to stem from a typographical error in some editions of Emmanuel Bénézit's *Dictionnaire des peintures, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs*, including the French edition of 1999. This was corrected in the English edition of 2006. Boulet exhibited regularly at the Paris Salons, even as late as 1951, when he showed two paintings and a pastel there.
3. New York 1947. A painting titled *Parisienne* was exhibited there, but it is unlikely to be the Clark's picture.
4. The date may be inferred from the fact that the exhibition at which it appeared in 1940 was devoted to contemporary French painting.

Jules Breton

French, 1827–1906

36 | Jeanne Calvet 1865

Oil on millboard, 22 x 19 cm

Lower right: Jules Breton / Jeanne Calvet / Douarnenez / Sardinière; upper right: 1865

1955.661

Jules Breton is well known for his depictions of French rural life, which he loved and from which he originated. He was born to a bourgeois family in a small town in the province of Artois in the far north of France, and throughout his life, was continually drawn to the simplicity of country living. Most of his early training was in Ghent, with the Belgian painter Félix de Vigne (1806–1863), whose daughter Breton eventually married. After a brief period of study in Antwerp, Breton moved to Paris in 1847 to further his training, first with Michel-Martin Drölling (1786–1851). Soon thereafter he entered the *École des Beaux-Arts* where he counted Ary Scheffer, Horace Vernet, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres as his teachers. His natural inclinations, together with the democratic tendencies brought out by the Revolution of 1848, strengthened his resolve to focus on depicting the nobility of rural life. Unlike the slightly older Jean-François Millet (cats. 217–21), whose subjects he emulated, Breton rarely showed the struggles of country life, but instead sought to highlight its dignity.

In this austere little portrait, a young woman is shown in strict profile against a plain dark green background. The woman is clothed in a simple brown blouse with a turquoise fichu at the neck, with her hair covered by a white headdress. She gazes forward, her light gray eyes focused on the distance in an expression of silent concentration. She seems serious and strong, with a simple grandeur despite her apparent rusticity. The sitter's straight nose and prominent chin and lips appealed to the artist, who referred to this type of woman as "a Gallo-Roman type, dear to Michael Angelo."¹ Indeed, the strong features of the woman coupled with the profile format bring to mind not only Michelangelo, but also figures on ancient coins or Renaissance plaquettes.

From the artist's inscription on the lower right of the painting, we know that the woman is Jeanne Calvet from the town of Douarnenez, and that she was