



**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,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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TECHNICAL REPORT The support is gray laminate cardboard 0.4 cm thick. It has a slight complex convex warp that is especially visible in the two upper quadrants. In some areas, there may be a texture impressed or scored into the cardboard surface, in a diagonal pattern, stronger in direction from the upper left to the lower right. Gouges made before the paint was applied are found in the front vessel in the center foreground. The wood strainer, most likely a later addition, is attached by wire brads nailed through the front edges of the picture. This rough pine, five-member strainer is slightly smaller than the original cardboard. The crossbar covers part of an inscription “F—T.” on the reverse. Across the left half of the back is a black charcoal inscription “Bordeaux,” and in the lower right is a longer illegible phrase in fainter strokes in the same medium. There are no age cracks in the paint, although the corners are fraying and delaminating, with accompanying paint loss. There is a line of bronze powder 1.9 cm up from the lower edge, and minor flaking along the left edge from contact with the frame. There are retouches in the clouds in the upper left and right sky. Although the image may have no varnish, it has an uneven gloss due to variations in the oil content of the paint. There is a layer of yellow surface grime, probably tar and nicotine. The strong yellow ultraviolet light fluorescence probably reveals the presence of zinc white in nearly every area of the painted image.

There is no ground layer, and the cardboard surface shows through the paint film sporadically as a degraded, hot-brown grayish color. No underdrawing was detected. The palette is quite dull, and the paint was broadly applied using paste consistency strokes in a jumble of wet-over-dry patches. The cardboard support probably accelerated the drying time of the initial paint layers by leeching some of the oil from the paint. Rough scumbles and glazes were then applied in such areas as the blue boat hull. The sky was reworked around the buildings and landscape elements, and a dry brush was used in the upper sky to brush out and extend the color.

1. *Recueil de la Commission des arts et monuments historiques de la Charente-Inférieure et Société d'Archéologie de Saintes* 1902–4, p. 316.

2. An invoice in the Curatorial files from the Galerie Monna Lisa, Paris, of 13 Feb. 1934 reads “1 paysage d’Henri Callot / Sologne.” This may record the purchase of this picture or of Callot’s *Port of La Rochelle* (cat. 42); since the Sologne region of France is inland, however, neither painting reflects such geography. Either the notation is incorrect, or the painting invoiced is no longer in the collection.

42 | **Port of La Rochelle** c. 1905

Oil on canvas, 46.5 x 61.1 cm

Lower left: h. CALLOT

1955.668

Little is known about the artist Henri-Eugène Callot, whose known body of work consists predominantly of harbors, boats, and maritime activities. Callot exhibited at the Paris Salon actively between 1898 and 1940 and was a member of the Société des Artistes Français.¹

This painting shows the limestone cliffs near the port of La Rochelle on the mid-Atlantic coast of western France. Callot painted from the perspective of someone standing on the grassy edge of a cliff and looking across the bay. Callot’s signature on the patch of grass in the bottom left corner marks the ledge from which he surveyed the beach, rocks, and water below. Green vegetation on the horizontal surface of the cliffs separates land from sky. A transparent blue shadow advances from the bottom left corner, sliding across the cliff face and the beach. The sides of the cliffs match the beige sandy beach below. A thick layer of paint in the bottom right quadrant gives a three-dimensional quality to a cluster of rocks that jut out into the water. Callot mixed dashes of yellow and green into the dark burgundy impasto. This variation of color is befitting the kind of vegetation that commonly grows on rocks that appear and disappear with the changing of the tide. The serpentine motion of the pale cliffs and beach leads the eye back and halfway across the width of the painting. The blue water hugs the edges of the land, drawing attention to an inlet on the horizon. Here, the white buildings of a port town materialize. The point of a spire reaches toward the clouds, which are punctuated by pockets of blue. The underbellies of the clouds are tinged with lavender, but they condense into a blanket of gray in the upper left corner of the picture.

Callot’s use of vibrant colors to capture the landscape near La Rochelle probably predates the brilliant spectrum employed by Paul Signac (1863–1935) for his paintings of the same harbor. Between 1911 and 1930, Signac repeatedly focused his attention on the activity of the port that can be seen in the distance of this painting by Callot. The white steeple in Callot’s painting corresponds to the Lantern Tower of La Rochelle. At fifty-five meters tall, the fifteenth-century



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tower could be seen from everywhere in the Pertuis d'Antioche strait and served as a landmark for sailors. The tower became a military prison in the nineteenth century and infamously held four sergeants who were executed for treason. KA

PROVENANCE [Possibly Galerie Monna Lisa, Paris, in 1934, sold to Clark, 13 Feb. 1934];² Robert Sterling Clark (possibly 1934–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined canvas of coarse and uneven weave (13 vertical warp x 19 horizontal weft threads/cm), sparsely tacked to the stretcher. The five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher has a vertical crossbar. There is a scuff across the entire width of the sky, which occurred when the paint was still soft. The paint is extremely dry and brittle, as if the pigments were underbound in the oil medium. This has caused numerous broken and crumbling impastos, some of which were originally looped over the surface like frosting, forming delicate flying bridges. The impastos are especially high in the lower two-thirds of the image. The surface is unvarnished and extremely grimy with large black airborne particulates visible under low magnifica-

tion. Under ultraviolet light, pale colors, particularly in the sky, fluoresce a strong yellow, indicative of the presence of zinc white. In reflected light, the strong vertical warp threads of the support are very prominent.

The white ground is a thin, water-sensitive and absorbent layer, which barely covers the canvas. There was no underdrawing detected with infrared reflectography, although under low magnification, charcoal deposits were seen between the horizontal paint bands near the horizon. The painting technique is more wet-into-wet than the other Callot (cat. 41), with a direct application of thick, paste consistency strokes with very little blending on the surface. The signature in the lower left looks enhanced with black ink.

1. See Karin Sagner-Düchting's account of Callot's career in *Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon 1992–*, vol. 15, p. 608.
2. An invoice in the curatorial files from the Galerie Monna Lisa, Paris, of 13 Feb. 1934 reads: "1 paysage d'Henri Callot / Sologne." This may record the purchase of this picture or of Callot's *Harbor Scene* (cat. 41); since the Sologne region of France is inland, however, neither painting reflects such geography. Either the notation is incorrect or the painting invoiced is no longer in the collection.