



**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,
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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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6. The painting's location is unknown. It remained with the family after Robinson's death and is reproduced in Allan 1982, p. 171.
7. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.14.
8. RSC Diary, 23 Sept. 1941.
9. The invoice from Knoedler to Clark states that this painting was exhibited at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery, Bournemouth, from Dec. 1935 to July 1939. An undated label on the reverse of the frame indicates that the painting was being sent from the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery to Harcourt Johnstone, care of Sotheby's, presumably in order to be sold, suggesting that Johnstone may have lent it to the Art Gallery for the full period. The painting also appeared in a sale at Sotheby's, London, 12 June 1940, no. 154, where it was reportedly sold to a buyer named Fearon, although it seems subsequently to have been returned to Johnstone.

Eugène Carrière

French, 1849–1906

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c. 1880–85

Oil on canvas, 35.2 x 27.3 cm

Lower left: EUG. CARRIERE

1955.673

Little d'Artagnan embodies many of the characteristics that one expects from the paintings of Eugène Carrière. Carrière studied with Alexandre Cabanel between 1869 and 1876, with an interlude between 1870 and 1871 on account of the Franco-Prussian War. After he married in 1877, Carrière and his wife traveled to London, where he encountered the work of J. M. W. Turner.¹ His new domestic life and time in England resulted in intimate family portraits painted in an atmospheric veil. Carrière's painting approach evolved in the 1880s through the influence of Jean-Jacques Henner and Auguste Rodin. Inspired by his colleague's restrained palette and sfumato technique, Carrière wrote to Henner to ask for advice.² Carrière's artistic exchange with Rodin began after the two men met in 1880 while working at the Sèvres porcelain factory. Both artists developed a style that often suggests forms emerging from an amorphous material. In Carrière's later work, his paintings became increasingly monochromatic. Instead of distinction given by color, his figures rely on light and shadow to give them shape.

Carrière painted *Little d'Artagnan* in a limited spectrum of earth tones. This full-length portrait shows a young boy dressed in emulation of the principal figure in Alexandre Dumas's adventure novel *The Three Musketeers*. The boy has a jaunty air as he stands with one hand holding a bird and the other on the hilt of his "sword"—a walking stick turned weapon through childhood imagination. His voluminous pants and shirt are cinched at the waist with a broad sash. A lacy white collar and cocked cavalier hat frame his round smiling face. Carrière created the background with a thin wash of rusty brown. The coarse weave of the canvas appears through the transparent color, giving the background the texture of a fabric curtain. This adds to the theatricality of Carrière's fantasy portrait.

Carrière painted several images of children in dark clothing with white collars between 1880 and 1885, such as *Child with a Glass* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). Scholar Yves Le Fur has noted that these works seem to refer to aristocratic portraits of children from centuries past as well as the childhood tendency to play at dressing up.³ *Little d'Artagnan*, however, appears to be the only one of these images that depicts a child dressed up as a specific historical or literary character. D'Artagnan and the musketeers were typically portrayed wearing the same kind of wide-brimmed hat as that worn by the boy. A few years after Carrière's death, Élie Faure described the artist's method of fashioning costumes in his studio. Handkerchiefs and pieces of paper became makeshift collars and sleeves in much the same way that children use anything available to create the props for their fictional lives.⁴ Carrière still struggled as an artist in the early 1880s, which forced him to be very resourceful. In 1884, Carrière was first launched toward success when he received an honorable mention for his Salon entry, a portrait of a child with a dog. The following year he received a medal for his submission to the Salon, a painting entitled *Sick Child* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). KA

PROVENANCE [Knoedler, London, sold to Clark, 23 Dec. 1929]; Robert Sterling Clark (1929–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a very open-weave fabric (13 threads/cm) that shows through the thinly executed paint film. In 1975, following tenting and buckling damage caused by



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water, the painting underwent a major treatment by Sheldon Keck. An old glue lining was removed and replaced by a wax resin and coarse linen (13 threads/cm) lining, and an old oil resin varnish was partially removed. The surface is presently varnished with a complex array of synthetic varnishes and linseed oil. The five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher may be original. The paint layer has scattered age cracks and old solvent abrasion in the thin background-*imprimatura* layer as well as in some final tones. Upper portions of the brushwork are melted and wrinkled from the various lining procedures, giving a general skinned appearance to the entire picture. It is difficult to determine the extent of early restoration through the thick and very shiny varnish layers, although under ultraviolet light, some retouching was detected in the floor and throughout the dark lines of the costume. There are small new retouches along the top edge, on the boy's proper left hand, and in the right background. In ultraviolet light, the blue-green fluorescence is very dense, and in normal light, all the brushwork is totally embedded in varnish. In reflected light, there is an angular line of resin deposited around the figure, possibly related to the partial cleaning, and a drip of resin in the upper left. The weave enhancement is visible despite the thick varnish layers.

The canvas may have been stretched by the artist and prepared with a thin white ground layer. There is also a warm, dark brown *imprimatura* layer covering the whole surface. Using infrared reflectography, a full charcoal underdrawing is visible; it shows that the position of the child's proper left arm was initially bent, with his hand resting on his hip. Lines on the proper right shoulder may indicate the bird was originally drawn perched on the child's shoulder. Changes in the leg positioning were also noted, especially the proper right leg. The lower, presumably older, repainted areas of the costume were also visible in infrared viewing. The paint layer was worked up in thin layers from the *imprimatura* base color to the slightly thicker costume strokes. If there were low *impastos*, they are now flattened.

1. Bantens 1983, p. 17.
2. Bajou 1998, p. 69.
3. Strasbourg 1996–97, p. 96.
4. Faure 1908, p. 44.