



**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

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Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,
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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
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Details:

TITLE PAGE: John Constable, *Yarmouth Jetty* (cat. 73)

OPPOSITE COPYRIGHT PAGE: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Bathers of the Borromean Isles* (cat. 89)

PAGE VIII: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Woman Crocheting* (cat. 267)

PAGE X: Claude Monet, *Seascape, Storm* (cat. 222)

PAGE XII: Jacques-Louis David, *Comte Henri-Amédée-Mercure de Turenne-d'Aynac* (cat. 103)

PAGE XVI: William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Nymphs and Satyr* (cat. 33)

PRECEDING PAGE 2: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Snake Charmer* (cat. 154)

il allait appuyer son visage à la vitre et regardait la tempête. La mer venait si près qu'elle semblait battre la maison, enveloppée d'écume et de bruit."

9. Robert Sterling Clark to Paul Lewis Clemens, 20 July 1944, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute Archives, Williamstown.
10. The dimensions in the sale catalogue are given as 33 x 65 cm. An unpublished album of the Arosa sale in the Frick Art Reference Library, however, clearly illustrates this painting, suggesting that the dimensions were printed incorrectly.
11. Erica E. Hirshler, in *Chicago–Boston–Washington 1998–99*, p. 179, states that Cassatt bought this picture from the Galerie Georges Petit in February 1878. If this is the case, Georges Petit, who was one of the organizers of the Arosa sale, might have acquired it from the sale on behalf of Cassatt. There is no annotation in the copy of the sale catalogue at the Frick indicating a buyer.
12. Mrs. Horace Binney Hare was the former Ellen Mary Cassatt, niece of Mary Cassatt. She and her two siblings were the primary beneficiaries of Cassatt's will; it therefore seems likely that she inherited this painting directly from her aunt.

95 | The Sailboat (Seascape) c. 1869

Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 64.3 cm

Lower left: G. Courbet.

1955.690

The composition of *The Sailboat (Seascape)*, depicting one large and one small vessel on a rough sea, is almost identical to that of another canvas, *The Sailboat* (location unknown).¹ In the first, the uniformly cloudy sky takes up about a third of the image, and the small boat appears to the left of the larger one. In the second painting, the horizon line divides the image nearly in half, and the thickly clouded sky darkens near the water, while the small boat appears in the distance at right. Both paintings probably depict the sea at Normandy, a region Courbet first visited in 1859, returning in 1865 and 1866, and in 1869 for a more extended period. Although it is often difficult to determine the exact date of many of the artist's seascapes, he seems to have painted agitated seas more often during and after his last visit to Normandy. As Sarah Faunce has suggested, the foaming waves in both *Sailboat* paintings, thickly brushed and worked with a palette knife, might therefore more likely date

the works to about 1869.² Robert Fernier, in his 1977–78 catalogue raisonné, however, dated *The Sailboat* (F 508) to 1865. While such a date is quite possible, his suggestion that the present work (F 912) dates to 1873 and represents “a replica” of F 508, “executed by Courbet during his stay in Switzerland,” seems more problematic.³

Throughout his career, Courbet regularly repeated subjects in one or more canvases. Finished versions of the same subject appear as early as 1844, in paintings such as *Lovers in the Countryside* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, and Musée du Petit Palais, Paris).⁴ From the 1860s onward, when he began increasingly to depict landscapes, Courbet painted numerous versions of such sites as the Puits Noir, the source of the Loue River, and the cliffs of Étretat. While many of these are individual approaches to a particular site, other paintings clearly share the same composition and execution, with little or no significant variation. In addition to the present work, such repetitions include *The Covered Stream* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris),⁵ a painting Courbet explicitly stated that he would copy more than a year later, to produce *Solitude* for his patron Alfred Bruyas (Musée Fabre, Montpellier),⁶ and *The Wave or The Stormy Sea* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris, and Musée Malraux, Le Havre),⁷ as well as two other versions (location unknown and private collection).⁸

Questions concerning the relation of one version to another, their dating, and even their attribution to Courbet can at times be difficult to resolve. The situation becomes even more complex concerning works dated after 1871, when Courbet painted familiar scenes from memory in part because his ability to travel became limited due not only to illness but also to his prosecution by the French government, which charged him with the destruction of the Vendôme column during the Commune of 1871, resulting in his exile in Switzerland. Given the marked similarities between the appearance and orientation of the central boat and the configuration of the waves in both *Sailboat* paintings, however, there is little reason to think that the Clark work was painted in 1873, at a different period from the other version. Indeed, during the 1860s, Courbet more than once executed multiple seascapes in relatively short periods of time, probably inspired by his own desire to experiment with slight variations in format, as in the present work, as well as by the specific requests of patrons such as Bruyas, and by the popularity of such subjects with the art-buying public.⁹ Courbet himself commented in a letter



95

to his family in 1865 that he had made thirty-five paintings, including numerous seascapes, in the space of less than three months during his visit to Trouville.¹⁰ Finally, the execution of the present painting, which appears to have been made fairly rapidly with few preparatory underlayers, supports the idea that it is not a careful copy after an already-completed work but is at least a renewed approach to the same subject.¹¹

The Sailboat (Seascape) has an interesting, though largely unconfirmed, early ownership history. According to the invoice drawn up by the Knoedler Gallery in London on Clark's purchase of the painting in 1921, it was "given by Gambetta to Mr. Werthner, who was the founder of the Neue Frei[e] Press[e] of Vienna, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of that paper, about 25 or 30 years ago."¹² There are a number of difficulties with this statement. If "Gambetta" is indeed Léon Gambetta, one of the first leaders of the Third Republic,

he died seven years before the *Neue Freie Presse*, founded in Vienna in 1864, marked its twenty-fifth anniversary, in 1889. Further, Gambetta is not known as a collector; he is listed in the database of the collections of the Musées de France as the former owner of only one painting,¹³ and Fernier does not mention him as the owner of this or any other work in the Courbet catalogue raisonné. But Gambetta is mentioned by Charles Léger as being instrumental in insuring that works sold from the artist's studio not long after his death would not be counted toward the repayment Courbet had been sentenced to make for the Vendôme column's reconstruction.¹⁴ Conceivably, then, *The Sailboat* was among the paintings in Courbet's possession at his death, and Gambetta, who may or may not have owned it, was somehow involved, or simply invoked, in its transfer to a Viennese collection, though such a provenance remains speculative. SL

PROVENANCE Possibly Léon Gambetta, Paris (d. 1882); E. Werthner, Vienna (possibly by c. 1889); Mrs. Pohl, Vienna, his daughter, by descent;¹⁵ George Crawley, London, on consignment to Knoedler (in 1921);¹⁶ [Knoedler, London, sold to Clark, 30 May 1921, as *Marine*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1921–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1956a, no. S-6, ill.; New York 1967, no. 10; Williamstown 1988a, no cat.

REFERENCES Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 22, ill.; Ashbery 1967, p. 45, ill.; Fernier 1977–78, vol. 2, pp. 184–85, no. 912, ill., as *Marine (Le Voilier)*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The present support, which appears to be a transfer, is an open-weave canvas having a thread count of 11 x 13 threads/cm. The six-member mortise-and-tenon pine stretcher is a replacement that was retained in the 2007 treatment. The painting had been glue-lined to linen, probably sometime before 1921. In 2007, the old glue lining was replaced as large air pockets between the lining and transfer fabrics were causing paint to flake. During the lining removal, the number 15 was discovered still stamped on the reverse of the ground layer, indicating a standard French canvas size. The new lining of linen and Beva 371 has a lightweight polyester monofilament interleaf layer. Cupped and darkened age cracks cover the upper half of the painting, and there is a concentric crack array near the skyline between the two boats. The 2007 cleaning removed a very yellow varnish, with uneven bands of resin in the sky and bits of undissolved resin scattered over the surface. Pools of old resin trapped around the impastos in the lower half of the image suggest that an earlier cleaning was quick and incomplete. Once the painting was more evenly cleaned, the surface was varnished with a synthetic resin, and new fills and inpainting were done in the damaged areas.

The off-white ground appears to have been applied by the artist. The brownish-black imprimatura layer, which covers at least the lower two-thirds of the painting, effectively blocks the discovery of any underdrawing. The surface paint is thickly applied, with brushstrokes and palette-knife marks visible. The black underpaint is revealed in the waves where the palette knife scraped deeply through the upper colors. Some passages of the sky and the paler areas of the waves have a pebbly texture, even where the surface was smoothed over by the knife. The shading glaze in the dark sails is also quite gritty, suggesting that the artist may have been grinding some of his own colors or adding dry, coarsely ground pigments to his paint.

4. F 46 and 47.
5. F 462.
6. F 583. Courbet referred to Bruyas's painting, in a letter to Urbain Cuenot of 6 Apr. 1866, as "a copy of the one I sold Nieuwerkerke [superintendent of the Fine Arts Administration at the time]"; translation from Chu 1992, p. 277, no. 66-7.
7. F 747 and 706,
8. F 710 and FS 14.
9. Petra Chu has noted that "more than any other genre, seascapes seem to have been painted to respond to the demand of city dwellers in the mid-nineteenth century, who were looking for simple, unadorned landscapes that offered a lively and direct impression of nature" ("plus qu'aucun genre, les marines semblent avoir été peintes pour répondre à la demande des citadins du milieu du XIX^e siècle, qui recherchaient des paysages simples, sans apprêt, et offrant une impression vivante et directe de la nature"). Lausanne–Stockholm 1998–99, p. 78. See also Wagner 1981.
10. Gustave Courbet to his family, 17 Nov. 1865, in Chu 1992, p. 268, no. 65-16.
11. See Technical Report. Since the other version has not been examined, it is even possible that the Clark painting might have been the first of the two.
12. See note 15.
13. This is a work titled *L'Alsace. Elle attend (1871)* by Jean-Jacques Henner, which had been given to Gambetta and is now in the Musée Henner, Paris.
14. Léger 1929, p. 211. The sales took place on 9 Dec. 1881 and 28 June 1882 (Lugt 41451 and 42185), and the Clark painting was not among the works in them.
15. The first part of this picture's provenance comes from the Knoedler invoice of 1921. See the Clark's curatorial file.
16. The information concerning Crawley comes from a letter from Ernest Johns of Knoedler, London, of February 1976. See the Clark's curatorial file.

1. F 508.

2. Sarah Faunce, author of the forthcoming revised Courbet catalogue raisonné, in conversation with the author, Aug. 2006.

3. Fernier 1977–78, vol. 2, p. 184: "replique . . . exécutée par Courbet durant son séjour en Suisse."