



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

**VOLUME ONE**

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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,  
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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)

dans son coeur qu'il trouve le sentiment exquis dont il imprègne son oeuvre à son insu, et l'espèce d'émotion indéfinissable qui frissonne sur sa toile. . . . Daubigny est original, car il procède directement de la nature."

5. Information on the history of the bridge courtesy of an e-mail from [tourismebeaumont.95@wanadoo.fr](mailto:tourismebeaumont.95@wanadoo.fr), 27 Aug. 2003. A painting by Edmond Petitjean (1844–1925) shows the reconstructed bridge (Mairie de Beaumont-sur-Oise); see Deleau 1992, p. 40, ill.
6. See the painting *The River Seine at Mantes* of 1856 (Brooklyn Museum; H 65), and the etching *The Steamboats (Watch Out for the Steamers)* (Delteil 1906–26, vol. 13, no. 112).
7. Herbert 1982, p. 147.
8. Murray 1873, p. 28.
9. Hellebranth 1976; see also Hellebranth and Hellebranth 1996.
10. E-mail from [tourismebeaumont.95@wanadoo.fr](mailto:tourismebeaumont.95@wanadoo.fr), 27 Aug. 2003.
11. Brettell 1990, p. 18, figs. 11, 12.
12. Paris 1892c, no. 53, ill. opp. p. 122, described on p. 159.

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## 100 | Woodland Scene c. 1873

Oil on panel, 23 x 17.8 cm

Lower right: Daubigny 187[ ]

1955.695

Charles-François Daubigny was drawn again and again to the area where he had spent his earliest years. Valmondois, a village near the right bank of the Oise River a bit upstream from Auvers, was the home of Mère Bazot, the artist's wet nurse with whom he stayed until he was nine in the hopes that the country air would strengthen his weak constitution.<sup>1</sup> Whether the therapy worked cannot be known, but it is clear that Valmondois held an abiding attraction, for Daubigny began picturing Valmondois as early as 1835 and continued to do so until the end of his life.<sup>2</sup> Victor Geoffroy-Dechaume, a lifelong friend of the artist, recalled their early excursions to the Oise. "Slightly before the railroads, towards 1834, we would go with my young friends, several times every year, either by foot or by coach, to the charming region of Valmondois, there where friend Daubigny had been nursed at the home of father and mother Bazot. . . . We were happy—we called it getting new vigor."<sup>3</sup> This small, vibrant picture dates from the 1870s, perhaps 1873.

Daubigny painted almost forty views of the region

around Valmondois, and almost half are of the type the French call *sous-bois*, or woodland interior, and of these, the vast majority (seventeen) feature a brook, as in this quickly brushed example. Even when not on his floating studio, Daubigny took advantage of every opportunity to paint water.

These pictures of a stream in the middle of the composition bordered by closely growing trees contain an inherent contradiction. Their freshness and immediacy are both supported and belied by their point of view. Some of the woodland pictures are bisected by a path rather than a stream. In them, it is easy to imagine the artist setting up his easel on the path and painting the tunnel of green in front of him. More problematic is his position in the pictures with a stream. The water spreads out to fill the entire bottom edge of the painting, leaving no space for the artist and his easel. Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña and Théodore Rousseau also painted pictures of unkempt undergrowth, often contained by arching trees and with a view to a luminous distance, as here. Their pictures, however, are horizontal in format and are grounded with a strip of land along the bottom edge. Daubigny's scenes, by contrast, are vertically oriented. The combination of the visual attraction to the light in the distance and the sense of height generated by the spindly tree trunks shooting up draws attention away from the bottom of the picture. The viewer, like the artist, is suspended, improbably but convincingly, over the water.

Because Daubigny returned to this motif over the course of almost four decades, his treatment of it can stand for the development of his career as a whole. In general, that progression began with scenes enlivened by anecdotal detail, stemming from his early work as an illustrator.<sup>4</sup> For example, in the Salon of 1847 he showed a painting dated to 1844 similar to this one but with two children and an older girl on the bank of a stream.<sup>5</sup> Other paintings variously included cattle or, in a work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Landscape with a Sunlit Stream* (c. 1877), a cluster of farm buildings. By the 1870s, the artist concentrated on painting the effect of backlit foliage. The tiny figure of what may be a fisherman just to the right of center in the Clark picture is distinguished by the ruddiness of his face, hands, and legs, the color opposite of the fresh green surrounding him.

Daubigny painted as often on panel as he did on canvas for these works at Valmondois. The paint, mostly a very bright green, was applied freely in long,





100

wet strokes that glided easily over the smooth panel. The effect is of a perfect melding of motif and execution. Fluid paint is a metaphor for flowing water and golden sunlight sliding down tree trunks.

Contemporary critics often criticized Daubigny for the uncertain structure of his paintings even while praising his spontaneous execution. The objects of their scrutiny were Daubigny's much larger Salon paintings, where any inconsistencies of scale or weaknesses of composition are more readily apparent. Zacharie Astruc responded to Daubigny's submissions to the Salon of 1859: "With all this he retains a delicious naïveté—simple as a child before his subject, adding nothing, removing nothing—strong of heart and eyes; unpretentious by means of the truth; arriving by force of feeling and by ardor and by his penetrating passion for his art at a remarkable individuality."<sup>6</sup> The naïveté of which Astruc speaks is even

more evident in a small painting like *Woodland Scene*. Frédéric Henriet, Daubigny's close friend and biographer, appreciated what Astruc called naïveté. He wrote of Daubigny's work in 1857: "I never ask myself, when before a painting, if it is a sketch or a [finished] painting, but quite simply if it is good or bad."<sup>7</sup> Robert Sterling Clark clearly thought this was a good painting, perhaps in part because of its size. Clark preferred small paintings, claiming that large canvases made artists lose control: "Almost all artists should paint small ones."<sup>8</sup> FEW

**PROVENANCE** Burton Mansfield, New Haven (until 1929, consigned to Knoedler, 30 Mar. 1929);<sup>9</sup> [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 30 Apr. 1929]; Robert Sterling Clark (1929–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1956a, no. S-19, ill., as *Sous bois*; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

**REFERENCES** Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 26, ill., as *In the Woods*; Fidell-Beaufort and Bailly-Herzberg 1975, p. 190, no. 141, ill., as *Le Ruisseau sous bois / Woodland Scene*; Hellebranth 1976, p. 71, no. 190, as *Le Ru de Valmondois*.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a mahogany panel 1 cm thick with chamfers 1.3 cm wide along the back edges. The panel's grain runs vertically, the back is painted gray, and the wood has a slight convex warp. There are some age cracks in the paint, although most cracks are only in the varnish. A raised trail of a human hair is lodged in the upper right quadrant and a brush hair is deposited on the surface in the lower left, probably left behind during varnishing. Frame abrasion is visible on the top, left, and right edges, along with gold deposits from the frame. The yellow discoloration of two thick coatings is partially disguised by the general green tone of the painting. The lower coating may be the original varnish, and there seems to be some retouching floating between the two layers, located in the water at the lower left and the dark portions of the trees. The tops of the impastos have less varnish, which seems to have been abraded off. The sheen is uneven with matte bands within 1.3 cm of the top and bottom edges.

The ground is a thin, commercial, off-white layer visible in the upper trees. A few age cracks have ground layer oozing up through to the surface. No underdrawing was detected. A few broad strokes below the upper paint may be unrelated to the final image. The paint was applied in small wet-into-wet strokes. There is a small bit of reworking by the artist in the light area of the image where pale strokes cover quite dark green foliage. A mix of transparent and opaque colors gives considerable luminosity to the scene.

1. Fidell-Beaufort and Bailly-Herzberg 1975, p. 31.
2. Hellebranth 1976 catalogues two paintings as early as 1835 (H 216–17, both unlocated); an example in the Musée de Pontoise is signed and dated 1877 (H 196).
3. Victor Geoffroy-Dechaume, quoted in Moreau-Nélaton 1925, p. 7; translation from Fidell-Beaufort and Bailly-Herzberg 1975, p. 33.
4. Aulnay-sous-Bois 1990, introduction.
5. H 182.
6. Astruc 1859, p. 303; translation from Fidell-Beaufort and Bailly-Herzberg 1975, p. 49.
7. Henriët 1857, p. 197; “Moi qui ne me demande jamais devant une peinture si elle est une esquisse ou un tableau, mais tout simplement si elle est bonne ou mauvaise.”
8. RSC Diary, 9 Feb. 1928.
9. See letter from Knoedler of 8 Sept. 1980 in the Clark's curatorial file.

## Honoré Daumier

French, 1808–1879

### 101 | The Print Collectors (Les Amateurs d'estampes) c. 1860–63

Oil on panel, 30.7 x 40.7 cm

Lower right: h. Daumier

1955.696

This is one of a considerable number of images in Daumier's oeuvre dealing with the subject of connoisseurs and art admirers. Print collectors in particular must have held a certain fascination for Daumier, since he himself relied on printmaking for his livelihood and for much of his reputation. The scene takes place in a darkened space whose walls are hung with what appear to be framed paintings, since they are represented with touches of color. Three men hover over the shoulders of the central figure, who holds a sheet up to the light that beams down on his shock of hair, white scarf, and on additional prints on the table, creating the brightest areas of the composition. Perhaps one of Daumier's earliest treatments of the idea of a group of art-lovers huddled intently in front of a work was a wood engraving of viewers of a painting, made to illustrate an article published in 1841, which he later revised in a lithograph published in 1862.<sup>1</sup> Both prints caricature the figures they represent, giving them exaggerated squints, grimaces, and expressions of pleasure—the caption to the lithograph reads “Fichtre! . . . Epatant! . . . Sapristi! . . . Superbe! . . . ça parle!” which is roughly translatable as “Gosh! Stunning! Heavens! Superb! It speaks!”

The figures in *The Print Collectors* are not caricatures, yet the intensity of their concentration and the sheer centripetal force with which Daumier shows them leaning, and almost straining, toward the object of their attention retain a hint of the prints' exaggerations. Ségolène Le Men has identified two of the men in the lithograph as Daumier himself and the landscape painter Jules Dupré, identifications that give the image a degree of self-mockery.<sup>2</sup> Since the figures in *The Print Collectors* are more generic, and are admiring a print rather than a painting, the situation is rather different. Here the trace of satire might reflect ambivalence on Daumier's part about his own dependence on what he may have seen as the excessive enthusiasm of such admirers for the printed image,