



**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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Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications  
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Designed by Susan Marsh  
Composed in Meta by Matt Mayerchak  
Copyedited by Sharon Herson  
Bibliography edited by Sophia Wagner-Serrano  
Index by Kathleen M. Friello  
Proofread by June Cuffner  
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**185 | Woman in Yellow** c. 1875

Oil on panel, 61 x 49.5 cm  
Lower left: Gustave De Jonghe  
1955-705

In contrast to the attentive mother in *Mother and Child* (cat. 184), the young woman in *Woman in Yellow* directs her attention to the small dog on her lap, perhaps a miniature spaniel, similar to the Japanese Chin portrayed by Renoir in *Tama, the Japanese Dog* (cat. 268), and seems to be tempting it with the small bon-bon that she holds in her left hand.

The Japanese fan that the woman holds and the Japanese-style decoration on the wall-coverings, the seemingly Islamic bowl that holds an indoor palm tree and the elaborately decorated sofa, together with the tiger-skin rug, create a highly fashionable, elaborate, and exotic interior décor, comparable to that in Lucius Rossi's roughly contemporary painting *A Young Woman Reading* (cat. 296). Here, though, the indications of the figure's social status are less clear. The woman evidently leads a life of pampered luxury, but it is not explicitly that of a kept woman, and there is no letter to suggest the role of an absent lover. Nonetheless, the imagery of a young woman playing with a small pet dog had clear erotic associations that date back at least to the previous century, as exemplified in works such as Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *La Gimblette* (private collection, Paris).<sup>1</sup>

Like his compatriot Alfred Stevens, de Jonghe adopted a more assertive, broken brushstroke during the 1870s, as seen in this work, creating a livelier, busier surface, in contrast to the more solid modeling and smoother paint surfaces of *Mother and Child*. ㅈ

**PROVENANCE** Robert Sterling Clark (by 1955); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** None

**REFERENCES** None

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a mahogany panel 0.8 cm thick, with chamfered edges 1.9 cm wide and a red wash on the reverse. The panel has a shallow complex warp, with a concave dip through the center, possibly caused by an early restrictive framing. Damage from a small nail on the lower edge and plowed paint along the right edge reinforce the tight early framing hypothesis. There are old (pre-paint) gouges in the panel to the right of the face. Age or traction

cracks appear in some passages, and there is minor abrasion in the vase. Some thicker deposits of old brown varnish and buried grime are probably residues from a cleaning at an unknown date by the restorer Henri Helfer. The ultraviolet light fluorescence of the remaining older varnish is moderately dense. A few impasto tops, below the proper right arm of the sitter, have been pressed flat. There are old scattered retouchings along the edges, top left corner, and in the thin dark details. It is possible that black ink was used in some of these retouches. The surface coating has a thin, even sheen.

The ground layers are off-white and probably commercially applied. Black ink lines running alongside painted lines in the wall moldings indicate at least some use of an under-drawing. Scattered deposits of charcoal dust suggest that a rough drawing may have preceded the ink work. Below the final colors may be a brown paint sketch, which can still be seen outlining the fingers. The fluid, paste-consistency paint is applied wet-into-wet in most zones, building up a dense paint film with moderately thick impastos. The artist made a slight change at the top of the woman's head, where her hair was covered by the background color. The large pillow behind the figure was extended out over the background, covering previous floral wall designs. It is also possible that the palm tree fronds were altered. Scratches below the black paint of the sofa decorations may indicate that the artist subtracted something while painting. The slightly abraded signature may be done in brown ink.

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1. For a reproduction of *La Gimblette*, see Rosenberg 1989, p. 99.

