



**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,
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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
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dark graphite. The front legs of the white horse have the most visible line work. The front legs of the brown horse are closer together in the underdrawing, with the final right front leg placed in a wider stance. The paint is very thin and sketchy for the most part, leaving areas of nearly exposed ground color visible throughout the image. The background was laid in after the horses were painted, except in the manes and tails, which have a more interlaced, wet-into-wet character. Some veils of color are so thinly applied that they look like stains. The brown horse's upper right front leg has an alligatored bituminous pigment which had to be inpainted to allow the leg to recede visually. There were other dark passages which exhibited less severe cracking associated with bituminous pigments. Black ink may also have been used for several strands of the dark horse's mane.

1. See, for example, Johnson 1981–89, vol. 1, pp. 30–33, nos. 41–52.
2. The relation between the Gilpin and Delacroix's watercolor is mentioned in London–Minneapolis–New York 2003–4, p. 178.
3. For the Géricault, see Grunchev 1978, pp. 150–51, no. INC 11. For the Vernet, see Dayot 1925, pp. 169–70, no. 216-2. Stubbs exhibited a painting on enamel of *Horses Fighting* at the Royal Academy in 1781, itself a version of an earlier oil painting (location unknown), and showed an oil of the same subject in 1787, again at the Royal Academy. This later painting was also reproduced as a mezzotint. See Egerton 2007, pp. 448, 498.
4. Taine 1865, p. 428; translation from Jobert 1998, p. 58.
5. Listed incorrectly as lent by Monsieur Boulanger-Cavé.

Eugène Deshayes

French, 1828–1890

118 | **A Swiss Lake** Possibly 1850s

Oil on canvas, 25 x 33 cm
Lower left: Eug. Deshayes
1955.711

Little is known about Eugène Deshayes, a situation that is further complicated by a frequent confusion of his name with that of Eugène-François Deshayes (1868–1939). He principally produced landscapes of locations ranging from sea coasts to forest interiors to mountain lakes and villages, and he exhibited at the Paris Salon from 1848 to 1867. Perhaps his most distinguishing characteristic is that some of his work

is based less on reality than on a slightly exaggerated, fanciful vision, somewhat similar to that of Gustave Doré (1832–1883), while other images, like the present canvas, appear to be careful studies of specific locations. In *A Swiss Lake*, the buildings of a small village cluster at the edge of a lake ringed by high mountains, the most distant of which are covered with snow. The sharply peaked roofs of the buildings along with the rugged terrain suggest a location in Switzerland, though no specific site can be determined.

Deshayes's work appears regularly on the market, and a number of these paintings depict similarly picturesque, mountainous locations. One painting, *The Staubbach Falls in Lauterbrunnen Valley* (c. 1858) is a dramatic yet accurate rendering of a Swiss village with one of the highest waterfalls in Europe cascading from a sheer rock cliff, an inherently breathtaking site that may have particularly appealed to Deshayes as it needed no exaggeration.¹ This work also provides concrete evidence that the artist spent some time traveling and working in Switzerland. Another painting, *Sailboats at Anchor on a Mountain Lake*, has a composition very similar to *A Swiss Lake*, with clusters of small houses at left and right, sailboats on a lake at center, and high mountain peaks receding into the distance, though the configuration of each element is different from that in the Clark work.² Deshayes may have based more generalized Alpine views like these on actual sites or simply produced variations on a composition in his studio.

The challenge of characterizing Deshayes's work is demonstrated by a group of small landscapes in the Musées de Mâcon. Two sets of paintings have been framed together since their acquisition by the museum in 1897 (when they were attributed to Charles-François Daubigny). In one set, a classically composed landscape, which has been described as resembling works by Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (1750–1819) or Achille-Etna Michallon (1796–1882), is flanked by two clearly imaginary vignettes that might almost illustrate a fairy tale, showing buildings with conical or pagoda-shaped roofs, accompanied in one case by an umbrella-like tree.³ Another painting, *Romantic Landscape* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), depicts fantastically spiky buildings and landscape forms that recall the work of Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450–1516). While *A Swiss Lake* clearly belongs to the more traditional side of Deshayes's output, it is fascinating to consider whether he may have included some degree of imaginative invention in this seemingly straightforward representation. SL



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PROVENANCE [Galerie Lorenceau, Paris, sold to Clark, 16 Mar. 1938]; Robert Sterling Clark (1938–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1979b, no cat.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The canvas is a fine-weave linen (25 threads/cm), glue-lined to a coarse fabric (13 threads/cm). The thread alignment of the lining canvas is 25 degrees off square, which shows on the front of the picture as occasional diagonal weave impressions. The artist's tacking margins are missing, but the five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher may be original. All the impastos have flattened tops due to the lining pressure. At the left between the smoking chimney and sailboat is a small old damage. There are a few old losses in the lower corners, some inpainted without fills, and a small pinhole in the reflection in the lower right quadrant. Small hairline fractures occur throughout the paint layer. Some wide splits in the lower right may be the result of canvas contractions during exposure to the wet lining adhesive. The moderately yellowed natural resin coating appears

streaky, following the vertical canvas threads. This may be the picture's original varnish, although it may postdate the completion of the picture. A second layer may have been added at the time of the lining. There are small retouches along the edges.

The ground is an off-white color and is likely a commercial priming. There is no visible underdrawing when viewed using either infrared or normal light, but in the few exposed areas of ground, there seems to be a thin dark brown paint between the ground and final paint layers. This may be a preliminary sketch used to block in the buildings. Most of the brushwork is applied wet-into-wet, with moderately thick brushstrokes of paste consistency that cover the surface with low, rounded impastos. Layered glazes were used to form the houses on the far right and to add the dark details elsewhere. A few drier scumbles were dragged across the thread tops to make the reflections and the boat masts, possibly after the rest of the paint had set.

1. Sale, Schuler Auktionen, Zurich, 14 Sept. 2007, no. 4281.
2. Sale, Thierry & Lannon, Brest, 10 May 2008, no. 393.
3. See Mâcon 2002, pp. 24–25.