



**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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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Alfred Dedreux

French, 1810–1860

108 | Equestrians c. 1840–55

Oil on canvas, 24.1 x 32.4 cm

Lower right: Alfred D.D.

1955.721

Alfred Dedreux, son of the architect Pierre-Anne Dedreux (1788–1849), was born in Paris in 1810. Dedreux studied with Léon Cogniet (1784–1880), who encouraged Dedreux to focus on historical paintings. From the moment that Dedreux exhibited *The White Stallion* (location unknown) at the Paris Salon in 1831, he was well regarded for his mastery of equestrian subjects. Dedreux's interest in horses probably developed through his exposure to Théodore Géricault (1791–1824). Dedreux's uncle, the artist Pierre-Joseph Dedreux-Dorcy (1789–1874), had a close friendship with Géricault and brought his nephew to visit Géricault's studio in 1823.¹ Likely inspired by this visit, the young Dedreux copied one of Géricault's English horse subjects.² Dedreux's paintings also show the influence of English artists such as George Stubbs (1724–1806) and John Constable (1776–1837).³ Dedreux first traveled to England in 1844 with King Louis-Philippe

(1773–1850). He returned in 1848, when revolution sent the king and his court into exile. Dedreux eventually gained favor with the new French regime, and he painted an equestrian portrait of Napoleon III in 1853. Dedreux had just finished a second portrait of Napoleon III on horseback when he died unexpectedly in 1860. The scholarship of Marie-Christine Renauld has laid to rest the popular myth that Dedreux died in a duel over the payment of this second portrait.⁴

In this painting, one woman and two men ride through a lush green forest. The three equestrians ride in a cluster, but the female rider edges slightly ahead. The woman's black riding habit drapes across the torso of her dappled gray mount. The two men wear red jackets and black caps, the attire traditionally worn for the fox hunt. The painting's close cropping focuses the viewer's attention on the figures and their mounts. Dedreux used a gradation of light to indicate that the group rides out from the dense forest toward an unseen clearing beyond the frame. The equestrians ride with intensity, leaning forward and fixing their gaze straight ahead. A hunting dog in the bottom left corner leads the riding party in the chase. The hound seems to disappear into the landscape of the bottom left corner, but this is the result of overcleaning that took place around the time that Clark purchased *Equestrians*. Likewise, the cleaning solvent damaged the faces and jackets of the male riders (see Technical Report).

While he was in England, Dedreux's sporting art found favor among his new aristocratic clientele. He painted equestrian portraits as well as pictures of the hunt and recreational horsemanship. Like the works in the Clark collection, Dedreux's paintings *Ride* (The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg) and *Horsemen and Women at the Edge of a Lake* (Musée du Louvre, Paris) show women participating in equestrian pursuits alongside the men. Sterling Clark bought *Equestrians* (then called *Amazone et cavaliers en forêt*) after he rejoined Francine in Paris, just a few months after he and seven male companions took a horse-riding tour that started in New York State and ended in Montreal.⁵ Clark's acquisition of equestrian subjects like those by Dedreux demonstrates the influence of his personal interest in horses on his collecting practices. KA

PROVENANCE [Neuville & Vivien, Paris, sold to Clark, 13 Dec. 1937, as *Amazone et cavaliers en forêt*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1937–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1961; Williamstown 1984a, p. 63, no. 68; Williamstown 1979b, no cat.

REFERENCES Renauld 2008, p. 129, ill.⁶

TECHNICAL REPORT The original support is a moderately fine-weave linen (25 threads/cm), which has been glue-lined and stretched on a five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The slight diagonal bulge in the upper left corner may have occurred at the time of lining. The lower edge has dished inward probably due to tensions caused by the lining adhesive. The tacking margins are gone, and there are tack holes in the corners, as if the picture had been pinned to a board during painting, and stretched later. There are scattered age cracks in the thicker brushstrokes of paint. The varnish is an irregular, horizontally applied brush coat of natural resin, which has a moderate fluorescence in ultraviolet light. There are deposits of an earlier coating around the perimeter of the picture and over the signature area in the lower right. Solvent damage can be seen in several dark passages where pigmented glazes have been removed or skinned. These include the two male equestrians' faces and jackets, as well as the entire lower left corner, where the hound and the surrounding greenery have been severely eroded. The foreleg hoof of one of the men's mounts now appears transparent due to solvent abrasion.

The ground is a white, moderately thick layer as seen at the edges, and is likely to have been commercially prepared. There seems to be a thin dark underpainted drawing whose outlines can occasionally be detected, as on the neck crest and rear legs of the dapple-gray horse. The brushwork was quickly applied in a fluid style executed wet-into-wet. Dark

colors and shading were done in resin-based glazes, whose floating pigment particles can be seen clearly under magnification. The lower left corner is now much paler in tone than it was originally. Undated file photographs that clearly reveal before and after cleaning states, coupled with the fact that the present coating is only moderately yellowed, suggest that the picture was cleaned just before or after entering Clark's possession.

1. Géricault painted Dedreux's portrait in about 1819, when he was still just a boy (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). For Dedreux's relationship with Géricault, see Cormack 2007, pp. 371–72.
2. Dedreux's drawing, *Peasant and Horse Dealer Examining a Dappled Horse* (c. 1823; Musée du Louvre, Paris), is based on Géricault's 1822 lithograph *Caux Horse (Cheval Cauchois)* (Delteil 1906–26, vol. 18, no. 49).
3. Chantilly, Senlis, and Paris 2004, p. 254.
4. Renauld 1997, p. 51.
5. Williamstown–New York 2006–7, p. 76.
6. Renauld incorrectly states that the painting was sold at Sotheby's, Monaco, 16 June 1990.

109 | Equestrians in the Forest c. 1840–55

Oil on canvas, 33.3 x 47 cm
Lower right: Alfred D. Dreux
1955-722

During his lifetime, Sterling Clark's success as a horse breeder overshadowed his status as an art collector—a role that Clark preferred to keep out of the public eye.¹ Clark devoted much of his time to training, riding, and breeding horses. This personal interest left an indelible mark on Clark's collecting practices. Clark bought horse paintings that demonstrate the breadth of his enthusiasm for this theme, from Edgar Degas's mounted jockeys in *Before the Race* (cat. 115) to Frederic Remington's wild-west paintings, *Dis-mounted: The Fourth Trooper Moving the Led Horses* and *Friends or Foes? (The Scout)*.² Clark had long been an avid rider and he began to invest heavily in stud farms in the decade preceding his acquisition of the two Dedreux paintings in the Clark collection. In 1937, Clark purchased his first Dedreux painting, *Equestrians* (cat. 108), as well as two colored lithographs, *A Cavalcade—Forest of Compiègne* and *After Dinner—Bois de Bologne*, made by Pierre-Vincent Gilbert