



**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,
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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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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



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(1801–1883) after paintings by Dedreux.³ Two years later, Clark bought *Equestrians in the Forest*, the very subject of the lithograph entitled *A Cavalcade*.

Equestrians in the Forest shows a riding party composed of men and women. Two men and two women surge ahead of a group of participants that can be seen in the distance on the left-hand side of the canvas. The women's black riding clothes contrast with the brilliant red jackets of their male counterparts. The woman closest to the viewer leans forward, carefully balancing as she sits sidesaddle on her mount. Both men sit erect and return the gaze of their female partners. They seem to engage in calm conversation despite their rapid pace. The horses' hooves do not touch the muddy ground as they gallop past a rustic fence and the golden leaves of the autumnal woods. Dedreux gave the horses the appearance of flight in order to evoke the momentum of their speed, combining fluid brushstrokes with careful draftsmanship to capture the thrill of this genteel sport.

There is another version of this composition, catalogued by Marie-Christine Renaud as *Leaving for the Hunt (Départ de chasse)*.⁴ The compositions

and details of the two paintings are extremely close, though the face of the lead male rider seems slightly wider in the Clark work, and the outlines of many forms appear to be more sharply defined. Given that there is an extensive underdrawing on the present canvas (see Technical Report), and that there is a reproductive lithograph of the composition, it may be that the Clark painting copies either the other painted version or the lithograph. The signature on the present work also seems slightly uncharacteristic when compared to those on other paintings by Dedreux, leading to possible questions of attribution, which cannot be fully resolved. In any case, the existence of multiple versions of this composition, as well as Dedreux's many different variations on the same theme, demonstrates the considerable market for horse paintings of this type on which Dedreux and other artists capitalized. KA

PROVENANCE [Carroll Carstairs, New York, sold to Clark, 16 Jan. 1939, as *Equestriens*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1939–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1961, as *Cavalcade, Forest of Compiègne*.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The original support is a canvas whose weave is visible in many areas due to the very thin paint. The picture is lined with a glue or paste adhesive onto coarse, irregularly stretched linen, with an interleaf of gauze fabric. Small holes along the edges may indicate that the tacking margins were at least partially included in the image at the time of lining. There are age cracks in the heavier brushwork and minute traction cracks in the black passages. Horizontal age cracks can be seen in the trees and in the beginnings of a concentric network above the left-most rider. There is some abrasion due to cleaning, and several impastos in the sky and horses are slightly flattened from lining pressure. The present varnish layer is a thin natural resin, seen in ultraviolet light as vertical brush marks, and probably dates to before 1939. Some residues of a previous coating or perhaps glazes can also be seen scattered over the surface. There are fills and retouching around the edges up to the brown paper tape. Under magnification, quite a few deposits of metal leaf can be seen in the upper left quadrant that seem unrelated to the image.

The whitish ground appears to be a fairly thick, possibly artist-applied layer, running in wide visible brushstrokes diagonally from the upper right to the lower left. An underdrawing of thin lines can be identified as graphite under low magnification. This rather complete drawing of the horses, figures, and trees is visible in infrared reflectography, and extends even to the musculature of the bay horse in the center. A slight change was made in the position of the leading foreleg of the white horse between the initial drawing and final image. A thin warm brown imprimatura layer seems to have been applied over the whole surface, with the pencil lines strengthened in thin brown paint. Localized color was then applied in the reds, whites, and flesh areas, using the underlying warm tone as part of the image. Brushstrokes are very fluid and thin, with glazes delineating shading and facial features. The signature, possibly applied in dilute black ink, is slightly abraded and has several losses where bubbles or skips in the strokes have chipped away.

1. *Time* 1956. See also Williamstown–New York 2006–7, p. 91.

2. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.11 and 1955.12.

3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.2569 and 1955.2570.

4. Renauld 2008, p. 128.

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas

French, 1834–1917

110 | Self-Portrait (Self-Portrait in a Soft Hat)

c. 1857–58

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas, 26 x 19.1 cm
1955.544

Some twenty painted self-portraits by Degas are known, all of them made in the artist's early years when he was studying in Paris, traveling in Italy, or attempting to launch himself as a professional artist.¹ They range from small introspective sketches to flamboyant life-size compositions, and were partly conceived as exercises in pose, lighting, and facial expression for a potential career in portraiture. Together they form a remarkable account of Degas's technical progress in the 1850s and early 1860s, and his transformation from timid ex-schoolboy to confident metropolitan dandy. Much of the character of the widely admired Clark *Self-Portrait* results from its execution at the mid-point in this formative process, when his command of the medium was already advanced but his inventiveness still constrained. Modest in scale and subdued in its visual drama, the picture nevertheless reveals a surprising breadth of artistic sympathy in the twenty-three-year-old Degas, as he emerged from his somewhat conventional apprenticeship.

The distinctive qualities of the Clark portrait are immediately evident when it is set beside one of the earliest and most celebrated pictures in the series, the large *Self-Portrait* of 1855 in the Musée d'Orsay (fig. 110.1).² Among his first exercises in oil technique, the Paris painting was created when Degas was briefly a student of the minor Ingresque artist Louis Lamothe (1822–1869), and was clearly much influenced by Lamothe's somber manner and by a famous self-portrait of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres himself.³ Here Degas poses stiffly with a drawing instrument in his hand as if working at an easel, but he wears a modern black jacket, bow tie, and wing collar in place of the studio outfit adopted by Lamothe or the flamboyant cloak worn by Ingres in comparable paintings. Illumination is equally severe, striking the young artist almost frontally and defining his features unsparingly, yet plunging much of the remaining scene into gloom. In contrast, the Clark *Self-Portrait* is intimate in form and manner, its cropped composition inviting us