



**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,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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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)

Robert Sterling Clark (1932–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1961, ill.; Williamstown 1980b.

REFERENCES Possibly Paget 1931, p. 139, no. 334.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fairly coarse linen (approximately 16 threads/cm), glue-lined to a heavy, double warp and weft bleached canvas (13 threads/cm). The five-member stretcher, which carries many old labels, appears to be original, but the tacking margins have been removed. The lining, cleaning, and edge retouching were performed in 1940 by the Beers Brothers through the Durand-Ruel Gallery. The cracking, together with several old lifted paint areas, were likely the reason for the treatment. There is a weave enhancement, probably from both fabric layers, and some flattened impastos from the lining process. Old cracks appear near the sitter along the center vertical stretcher bar, and age cracks can be seen in the left and right sky areas. Traction cracks are visible in the man's red jacket and in the background surrounding the horse's rear legs. The left edge may be extended, judging from the band of repaint 1.3–1.9 cm wide. Small flecks of blue paint in the sky appear to be a restoration application, used to imitate the thinness of the original sky paint. A small arrow shape, perhaps a cockade, protruding from the sitter's hat, seems to be abraded. There are old drips in the lower left quadrant. The varnish is a thin brush coat of natural resin with moderate yellowing.

The ground appears to be several commercially applied, cream-colored layers. Only a few underdrawing lines are visible in low magnification, one along the ridge of the horse's neck, and there may be deposits of charcoal along some paint edges. There are no detectable alterations between the drawing and painting stages. The paint application runs from thin to moderately thick strokes, with the sky being applied quite broadly and sparingly after the horse and rider were complete. There are a few low-level impastos in dark details and in the white highlights. Black ink, evident in its uneven adherence to the surface, may have been used for some details.

1. Ellis 1951, p. 51.

2. Paget 1931, p. 139, no. 334. As the account books show, Ferneley charged £10 10s. for single horse portraits, increasing the sum depending upon the number of horses and figures in the work. For the identification of the Hungerford picture with the Clark's painting, see the Clark's curatorial files.

3. See Ferneley's account book from 1831, reproduced in Paget 1931, pp. 139–40, nos. 328–339. Of all the paintings listed from 1831, the painting sold to H. H. H. Hungerford titled *Portrait of Himself on Horseback* (no. 34) seems the most likely to be the Clark picture due to both its description and price.

Eugène Fichel

French, 1826–1895

138 | Madame P . . . 1857

Oil on panel, 24.2 x 18.9 cm

Lower left: E. FICHEL. / 1857.

1955.735

Fichel's painting was exhibited at the Salon in Paris in 1857 with the title *Portrait of Mme P . . .*; it was standard in these years for portraits of women to be titled in this way even if their sitters were well known, preserving a veneer of decorum through anonymity when their image appeared in the very public forum of the Salon. The subsequent history of many of these pictures, including the present small panel, has detached them from the circumstances of their making; the identity of Madame P. remains unknown.

The sitter is seated in a static and relatively formal pose, her gaze toward the viewer and her hands joined on her lap. She is dressed in pink, wearing an elegant and elaborate crinoline ball gown, made of "flounced taffeta."¹ Beyond this display of lavish fabrics, further interest is added to the image by the objects on the carpet-covered table beside her: an open jewel box, with a necklace spilling out of it, and, beside this, a pair of gloves, a closed fan, and—perhaps—a white shawl. These details emphasize the sitter's role in society, suggesting that she is preparing to go out (or she may have just returned). The richly decorated room, with its carved wood cabinet and ornamented wall coverings, also underscores the sitter's affluence. Beyond this, though, there are no clues that suggest any further dimensions of her situation or personality.

Fichel was taught by Martin Drölling and Paul Delaroche; his main specialty as a painter was multi-figure genre scenes, sometimes in contemporary dress but more often in eighteenth-century costume. He won a third-class medal at the Salon in 1857, the year in which this picture was exhibited, and was made *chevalier* of the Legion of Honor in 1870. JH

PROVENANCE [Georges Muller, Paris, sold to Clark, 10 Dec. 1937]; Robert Sterling Clark (1937–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Paris 1857, no. 967, as *Portrait of Mme P . . .*; Williamstown 1982a, no. 9, ill., as *A Girl in Pink (Portrait of Mme P . . .)*.



138

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a mahogany panel (0.8 cm thick) with the grain running vertically. The reverse is varnished and stamped with the numeral “2” which indicates a standard French portrait size. An inscription on the back reads “Portrait of Mme P—”, and there also seems to be an illegible monogram. There is a small loss in the wood at the lower right corner, which seems to have occurred before the panel was prepared as an artist’s support. A repaired crack (2.5 cm) is visible in the upper right corner, and frame abrasion occurs at the top and bottom edges. Although the last cleaning was quite careful, there is some solvent damage in the hair and eyes and a drip of brown material on the sitter’s neck. The natural resin varnish has threads of undissolved resin scattered throughout the surface. The ultraviolet fluorescence is thin, with greater pools of coating at the top and bottom edges. The gloss is fairly even, and there does not appear to be any retouching.

The off-white ground layer is commercially applied and has both diagonal upper right to lower left striations from

the method of application and a gritty surface texture from inclusions in the matrix. There are scattered deposits of black charcoal dust in all areas of the paint, suggesting that charcoal underdrawing lines were dispersed during the paint application. Lines drawn to mark the divisions in the wall covering are still visible. Using infrared reflectography, sketch lines for the flounces of the skirt can be read through the pink paint where there were changes in the final paint layers. There is also a slight change in the decoration on the chair crest. The luminous final paint layers sit directly on the off-white ground. Most of the technique seems to be wet-into-wet applications of thin to paste-consistency paint.

1. Williamstown 1982a, no. 9.