

The background of the cover is a detailed 19th-century painting of a storm at sea. The sky is filled with heavy, dark, and turbulent clouds, with some light breaking through near the horizon. The sea is dark and choppy, with white-capped waves crashing against a sandy beach in the foreground. Several large sailing ships with multiple masts and sails are visible on the horizon, some appearing to be struggling against the wind. The overall mood is one of intense natural power and maritime drama.

**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,  
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[www.clarkart.edu](http://www.clarkart.edu)

Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications  
and Information Resources  
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Michael Agee, Photographer  
Laurie Glover, Visual Resources  
Julie Walsh, Program Assistant  
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Publications Interns

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  
Production by The Production Department,  
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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)

paste-linen lining and a five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The thread count of the primary fabric is inaccessible, but it seems about the same weight as the lining canvas (16 thread/cm). An old tear repair runs through the young woman's knee area, slightly visible in raking or reflected light. There is also an old area of disturbed paint between the heads of the couple. In many areas, age and traction cracks are combined into one network, with brown staining of the ground layer from the lining adhesive. There are several concentric crack systems in the young woman's skirt, some pulling forward slightly, and patches of fine diagonal cracks which may indicate the presence of a twill weave canvas. The varnish is thick and yellow, and has a glassy sheen with its own crack network. The ultraviolet light fluorescence is very dense, as if an early resin layer remained over most of the picture; this is confirmed by a 1935 invoice stating that Madame Coince only resaturated the surface, probably adding more varnish. The fluorescence is deep enough to mask the extent of the old retouching. Some traction cracks in the older woman's clothing and the background are retouched, as are the dark outlines and folds of the man's coat, and his proper right hand. There is solvent abrasion in the man's dark hair, the black costume elements of the old woman, and several areas of the younger woman's skirt.

The white ground layers are quite thick, creating a smooth, level surface on this fairly coarse fabric. A little underdrawing can be seen with infrared viewing, such as changes in the line of the man's collar. A few lines in the faces can be detected using low magnification. There are also some artist's changes or anomalies in the paint structure visible in infrared reflectography: light patches in the area above the table where the screen now appears, and the changed angle of the draped curtain in the background door opening. There may be a brown-toned wash drawing beneath the upper colors, and many pigments, when scanned with a microscope, have the coarse look typical of hand-ground preparation. The brushwork is clean, minute, vehicular, and fluid. Wet-into-wet brushwork was used only within the confines of individual forms, such as the heavy nap weave of the oriental carpet covering the table.

1. As explored by Weisberg 2004.
2. See Chu 1974.
3. Location unknown; reproduced in Rosenthal 1913, p. 309. Although the mother is absent, all other details, including the book on the floor, pillow, side table, and even a similar screen and painting, appear in Gigoux's painting.
4. Pierret 1838, p. 31: "Dans l'intérieur d'un salon, un jeune homme est assis à côté de son épouse malade; il cherche à la distraire par la lecture; la mère, appuyée sur le fauteuil de sa fille, contemple ses enfants."

## Émile Friant

French, 1863–1932

### 144 | Madame Seymour 1889

Oil on panel, 28.5 x 19 cm

Upper right: E. Friant / 89

1955.741

Born in the small town of Dieuze in the Moselle region of France, Émile Friant received his initial artistic training in the nearby city of Nancy, to which he moved as a child. His first teacher was the painter Louis Théodore Devilly (1818–1886), who had been a pupil of Eugène Delacroix in Paris. Thus, despite his provincial background, Friant had ties to the Parisian art world from an early age; an interplay between the capital and his adopted town remained a constant throughout his life. Friant distinguished himself at the local Salon (*La Société Lorraine des amis des arts*) in 1878, which led to a scholarship to further his studies in Paris. He was accepted into the atelier of the well-known painter Alexandre Cabanel (1823–1889) and studied with the master for one year. In Paris he eventually came to favor a more naturalistic style than that promoted by Cabanel. Friant debuted at the Salon in Paris in 1882, and rapidly gained prominence. The year 1889 proved especially noteworthy for Friant, who collected the grand prize at the Salon that year for what is probably today his best known painting, *La Toussaint (All Saints' Day)* (Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts). That same year he also won a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle, decided to exhibit with the newly formed Société nationale des beaux-arts (Champ de Mars) as an alternative to the official Salon, was made *chevalier* of the Legion of Honor, and executed the portrait seen here.

In this small painting on panel, a fashionably dressed woman shown in three-quarter view gazes directly at the viewer with a calm and confident expression. She sits erectly in a simple armchair with her gloved hands resting lightly in her lap, and wears a dark teal-colored dress and an elaborate black hat. The sitter's identity has not yet been ascertained, and the current title comes from an old label attached by Sterling Clark to the back of the panel that indicates the sitter is "Madame Seymour." She seems to be the same "Madame S." seen in a portrait that Friant exhibited at the Champ de Mars in 1891.<sup>1</sup> Given the English surname attached to the sitter as well as the



144

portrait's date, it is likely that the present painting was made in London during the artist's extended period of travel between 1886 and 1892.<sup>2</sup> The overall effect of the present painting is decidedly monochromatic in the artist's use of dark tones that are punctuated only by the cream color of the sitter's ruff and gloves. Friant often favored a rather limited palette, and darkly dressed female figures appear in many of his works,

such as *Girl from Nancy on a Snowy Day* (1887; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy) as well as the aforementioned *La Toussaint*. Unlike these more highly finished large-scale pictures, the Clark painting is loosely executed and has the appearance of a study. The sitter's face, however, is delicately and assuredly painted. The picture lacks any true definition of space, with the background plane of the floor indicated by just a slight

change in color. Friant's small-scale panel portraits such as this typically featured his friends as sitters.<sup>3</sup>

Friant was never entirely comfortable in Paris and returned often to Nancy, keeping homes in both cities once he was financially secure enough to do so. Friant eventually became an important member of the *École de Nancy*.<sup>4</sup> In addition to his portraiture, Friant painted Orientalist scenes (he had traveled to Tunisia), landscapes, and genre paintings, and was also a sculptor and printmaker.<sup>5</sup> His works were widely sought by collectors of contemporary art in France and the United States. John G. Johnson of Philadelphia and Henry Clay Frick of Pittsburgh bought paintings by Friant in the 1890s.<sup>6</sup> Today he is thought of as an accomplished painter in the pan-European Naturalism movement that ran counter to Impressionism, on the one hand, and Academic painting, on the other.<sup>7</sup>

The invoice for this painting indicates that it was sold directly to Francine Clary in 1917, two years before her marriage to Sterling Clark.<sup>8</sup> In 1919, Friant executed portrait drawings of Francine and Sterling, perhaps in celebration of their nuptials that year.<sup>9</sup> While it is uncertain if the couple knew Friant personally before this time, they would have known his work by way of its frequent exhibition in Paris. The Clarks eventually came to own four other drawings by Friant, three of which are inscribed "cordial souvenir" and dedicated to either Mr. or Mrs. Clark, indicating that a close relationship between the artist and his newlywed patrons had developed by 1920.<sup>10</sup> KP

**PROVENANCE** [A. Gassot, Paris, sold to Clary, 12 July 1917, as *Portrait de femme*]; Francine Clary, later Mrs. Robert Sterling Clark (1917–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.; Osaka and others 1994, p. 33, no. 13, ill.

**REFERENCES** Nancy 1988, p. 12; McIntosh 1997, p. 590, pl. 10; Williamstown–New York 2006–7, p. 38.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a mahogany panel 1.3 cm thick with a very slight twisted warp from the top left to the lower right, with the latter corner turned slightly upward. The direction of the grain runs vertically. A paper label on the gray-painted reverse records the artist's supplier as Charles Roberson & Co. The end grain at the lower edge has three small, cut-off dowels and several smaller holes as if the panel came from a larger assembled object. The lack of paint along 0.6 cm of the bottom edge may suggest that some type of easel or holder was used to paint the picture. In

1935, Chapuis and Coince cleaned and restored the painting. Small furrows on the left and right edges suggest a tight framing before the paint was completely hardened. In general, the paint layer is in good condition, with no age cracks. There may be slight fading in the thin reds and purples of the face. There is a streaky brown deposit along the sitter's proper right arm. The surface coating is yellowed and has vertical striations resulting from the brush application. In ultraviolet light, deposits of an earlier varnish remain around the perimeter of the surface, and the band at the top edge is particularly shiny.

The ground is comprised of a number of commercially applied off-white layers. They present a smooth surface texture that completely hides the wood grain. A few remnants of smudged underdrawing lines, probably charcoal, are visible under magnification near the neck ribbon. Using infrared reflectography, the lines in the throat lace and the preliminary oval outline of the face become more visible. There does not appear to be any painted sketch between the underdrawing and the final colors. Lower cross braces on the chair back were painted over with the background color. Adjustments to the hat's rim and feathers can be seen with the unaided eye. The very feathery paint handling of the face contrasts sharply with the bold and sure brushwork in the costume.

1. Location unknown; illustrated in Paris 1891b, p. 143, no. 377.
2. On Friant and his travels, see Nancy 1988. An earlier source on the artist is Alexandre 1930.
3. See, for example, his portrait of Madame Coquelin, mother of the Coquelin brothers, well-known actors who were friends of Friant and collected his work. The painting is reproduced in Pittsburgh 1997, p. 252.
4. Another notable painter of the *École de Nancy* was Victor Prouvé, but the chief proponent of the school was the glassmaker Émile Gallé. See Nancy 1999. Friant's regionalism is discussed by Thomson 2005, p. 215.
5. Alexandre 1930 reproduces many etchings by the artist.
6. See Pittsburgh 1997, pp. 254–60.
7. See, for example, Weisberg 1992, pp. 82–85.
8. At the same time she also purchased *Les Champs-Élysées* (cat. 191), attributed to Stanislas Lépine.
9. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.742 and 1955.743.
10. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.1651–54.