

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 historical 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,  
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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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## Eugène Fromentin

French, 1820–1876

### 145 | Arabs Watering Their Horses 1872

Oil on panel, 59.7 x 72.7 cm  
Lower right: Eug. Fromentin. 72  
1955.744

Eugène Fromentin established his reputation as an Orientalist in the 1850s after making two trips to Algeria in 1846 and 1847–48, and a third in 1852–53. His goal while there was to record the landscape and its inhabitants in both written notes and drawn sketches, and he produced not only images of North Africa, but also two books recounting his journeys, *Un Été dans le Sahara* (1857) and *Une Année dans le Sahel* (1859). His status as a firsthand witness and published expert, and even in some cases as something of a pioneer, since he visited such places as the southern Algerian city of Laghouat (which no French artist had previously seen or recorded), gave many of his paintings a particular aura of authenticity.<sup>1</sup> As a prominent and successful artist who became an *officier* of the Legion of Honor in 1869, Fromentin arranged to join the French delegation at the inauguration of the Suez Canal later the same year, largely in order to travel to Egypt. He also visited Venice in 1870 and the Netherlands in 1875. The sketches, paintings, and written notes that the artist made during all these trips served him later, after his returns to France, as the raw material from which he could compose additional paintings and narratives.

Although his most recent North African journey before painting the present image had been to Egypt, Fromentin appears to have worked largely from memory and from sketches or previous works situated in Algeria to compose *Arabs Watering Their Horses*. The work is not, however, labeled explicitly as a *souvenir* or recollection of the country, as some later works were. Instead, early sources record an inscription at the lower left of the panel that read “Algérie” (Algeria), as if to suggest it was painted on the spot.<sup>2</sup> The inscription is no longer visible, perhaps having been lost during an early treatment (see Technical Report). Even without this label, it is clear that the steep cliff rising from the riverbank and the additional mountains in the distance differ markedly from most of the landscapes Fromentin made of Egypt. These usually centered on the Nile and showed the wide, slow-moving

river and the open, flat terrain that surrounded it. Further, the whitewashed building topped by a small dome in the middle distance of this work resembles the *marabouts* and other structures that Fromentin had recorded during his Algerian sojourns in drawings like *Sketch for “A Moorish Burial”* (c. 1853, private collection), and *Mustapha-Supérieur: Villa Suzini* (1853; private collection).<sup>3</sup> As Thompson and Wright note, “in his Egyptian paintings, just as for Algeria, Fromentin began by representing specific sites. . . . In the end, the Egyptian works often fused imperceptibly with the more distant memories of Algeria.”<sup>4</sup>

By combining recollections and careful studies of the North African terrain and its inhabitants, and studies of horses, a favorite subject, Fromentin produced an appealing image of an ordinary scene. Although the characteristic buildings and the clothing of the figures in *Arabs Watering Their Horses* clearly mark the site as non-European, there is little emphasis on exoticism; rather, Fromentin fairly successfully achieved his stated goal of “giving a simple, clear, and true idea of the things I see,” even if he may have seen these things separately rather than experiencing them together in a real location.<sup>5</sup> But it is just his process of composition that distances the work from observed reality. The condition of the panel, too, which reveals evidence that the artist reworked the image considerably, adding and altering elements, further reinforces its status as an imagined scene. In addition, the way the panel is painted, with softly brushed, slightly vaporous trees, evident brushstrokes, and an overall green and brown tonality punctuated by the red vest, cap, and tunic worn by the figures, recalls French landscape paintings of earlier in the century, an approach in which Fromentin had been trained at the beginning of his career by Jean-Charles Rémond (1795–1875), who had also taught Théodore Rousseau. These aspects combine to render the scene almost familiar-seeming, while still maintaining the foreign aspect of a location that is clearly outside Europe.

The effect of this approach is similar to that found in a work like Jean-Léon Gérôme’s *Fellah Women Drawing Water* (cat. 153), in which exoticism is downplayed in favor of a view of a place and its inhabitants that seems timeless in its picturesque qualities. Fromentin’s paint handling and generalized, perhaps even composite, landscape underscore the work’s status as an artistic representation rather than a careful transcription, as some of his other works were. At just this period, in his written notes on his Egyptian trip,



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Fromentin explicitly acknowledged this subjectivity: he wished, he wrote, “to move [the reader] with the memory of that which moved me, and to leave the reader indifferent about that which did not interest me.”<sup>6</sup> If, as John Zarobell has proposed, some of Fromentin’s earlier paintings depart from Orientalist traditions thanks to the artist’s intimate knowledge and direct recording of their subjects, the present work lacks the requisite objective specificity, and tends to fall into a standard Orientalist category by presenting a generalized, picturesque view that might be more easily assimilable by a European viewer.<sup>7</sup>

By 1872, when Fromentin made this work, he was beginning to question his vocation as an artist. Although he still painted actively and showed his work in the official Salon, he made many works principally for the market, even commenting to a friend in 1871 that he wished to “make a lot” of small panels in order “to print money.”<sup>8</sup> While clearly the product of considerable study and effort, *Arabs Watering Their Horses* is

probably just this sort of studio composition made for the market, as it entered the collection of William H. Vanderbilt—no doubt precisely the kind of American collector Fromentin was hoping to attract—just a short time after its completion. SL

**PROVENANCE** William H. Vanderbilt, New York (by 1879–d. 1885); George Washington Vanderbilt, his son, by descent (1885–d. 1914);<sup>9</sup> Cornelius Vanderbilt III, his nephew, by descent (1914–d. 1942); Grace Wilson Vanderbilt, his wife, by descent (1942–1945, her sale, Parke-Bernet, New York, 18 Apr. 1945, no. 122, sold to Knoedler); [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 20 Apr. 1945]; Robert Sterling Clark (1945–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1957, no. 302, pl. 3; Williamstown 1984a, no. 76; Williamstown 1994a, no cat.

**REFERENCES** Strahan 1879–80, vol. 3, pt. 12, p. 108; Vanderbilt 1884, p. 66, no. 131; Champlin and Perkins 1885, vol. 2, p. 96; Vanderbilt 1886, p. 47, no. 130; *Collector* 1890, p. 83; Metropolitan Museum of Art 1905, p. 220, no. 85; Burroughs

1916, p. 94; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 61, ill.; Polley 1967, p. 31; Thompson and Wright 1987, p. 288, ill., as *Arabes faisant boire des chevaux*; Thompson and Wright 2008, p. 349, ill., as *Arabes faisant boire des chevaux*.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The present support appears to be a mahogany panel 0.8 cm thick, but it is possible that the original panel may be a thinner board now glued into a tray-like mahogany panel, which has a raised perimeter lip 0.6 cm wide. This may mean that the original dimensions are about 1.2 cm smaller in both directions. The reverse also has a cradle that may be contemporaneous with the back panel since they are both varnished in the same manner. There is a 3.8-cm crack at the right edge of the original panel, located 35.2 cm up from the lower edge. The paint in the lower right quadrant is wrinkled, probably due to the artist's changes in the composition. Presumably the painting was once over-cleaned, as there is solvent abrasion in the raised wrinkled areas, and extensive retouching was detected throughout the image. De Wild cleaned the picture in 1945. There appear to be two or three varnish layers on the painting, and the sky and the dark background colors fluoresce quite densely under ultraviolet light. The surface reflectance is shiny for the most part, with scattered matte patches. In 1997, minor adjustments were made in some discolored retouches.

The panel may not have a traditional ground layer, although in some locations a rough, possibly artist-applied off-white layer is visible. The underdrawing is done in black ink and may outline primarily the animals and figures. Some paint changes by the artist are visible in reflected light as wrinkling, while other alterations are visible using infrared reflectography, including several large tree branches, which are painted out in the left third of the image. The man in the white robe at the right appears originally to have been closer to the center of the composition. Remnants of this placement are detectable in infrared light, on the X-radiograph, and in normal light. Among numerous other changes, the rear leg of the pale brown horse at the right was moved. It is possible that there are additional alterations or that the artist was reusing a support with an earlier partial image, as the X-radiograph shows a number of shapes that seem unrelated to the final image. The paint was applied in dry scumbles in a sketchy manner, with smaller, more fluid, detail strokes. A warm-toned black ink was used for the signature, and appears to have been used for the dark outlines on the black horse. This particular horse may also have been added on top of the scenery, perhaps when the small figures and animals were applied in the center background area. Most of the figures and horses were painted before the surrounding scenery.

1. Zarobell 2010, pp. 77–78.
2. These sources include the records of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the long-term loan of this painting from George W. Vanderbilt, from 1886 to 1919; and the 1945 sale catalogue of the Vanderbilt collection, where

- the inscription is given as “Algiers” rather than “Algérie.”
3. See Thompson and Wright 2008, pp. 120, 117.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 328: “Dans ses tableaux égyptiens, de même que pour l’Algérie, Fromentin commença par représenter des sites spécifiques. . . . À la fin, les œuvres égyptiennes fusionnent souvent imperceptiblement avec les souvenirs plus distants d’Algérie.”
  5. From “Carnets du voyage en Égypte” (1869), quoted in Thompson and Wright 2008, p. 307: “Je voudrais donner des choses que je vois une idée simple, claire et vraie.”
  6. From “Carnets du voyage en Égypte” (1869), quoted in Thompson and Wright 2008, p. 307: “émouvoir avec le souvenir de ce qui m’a ému, laisser le lecteur indifférent pour ce qui ne m’a pas intéressé moi-même.”
  7. Zarobell 2010, p. 84.
  8. Eugène Fromentin to Charles Busson, June 1871, in Wright 1995, p. 1683: “faire beaucoup; et battre monnaie.”
  9. George Washington Vanderbilt placed this and a number of other works on long-term loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1886. The works were returned to his nephew in 1919.

## José García y Ramos

Spanish, 1852–1912

### 146 | Inside the Bullring c. 1880

Oil on panel, 28.4 x 18 cm  
Lower right: García y Ramos / Sevilla  
1955.837

Five bullfighters and a mounted picador rest next to the wall of a bullring. One of the matadors smokes a cigarette while another wipes the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief. A standing man converses with a gentleman located behind the protected area of the plaza. Yet another figure sits against the barrier beside another matador who has his cape draped over his left arm. The picador sits on his horse, gazing into the distance. On the balcony above these men, the president of the bullfight waves a handkerchief, a gesture that could signify the presentation of a trophy in honor of a bullfighter's success. The tiers and balconies of the bullring are partially filled with spectators.

Rather than focusing on the drama of a bullfight, García y Ramos depicts a respite from the action and features a partial view of the bullring of Seville from a perspective that is inside the arena. The resting bullfighters and their attire are depicted in great detail,