



**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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Robert Raoul André Guinard

French, 1896–1989

166 | Nicole Guinard c. 1938

Oil on canvas, 17 x 14.3 cm

Upper left: Robert Guinard

1955-755

Outside of Sterling Clark's diary and personal correspondence, little is known about Robert Guinard. He was classically trained at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris and studied under Fernand Cormon (1845–1924) and, later, Jean-Pierre Laurens (1875–1933). Exhibition history suggests that he showed regularly around Paris and even won the Grand Prix de la Ville de Paris in 1932, which allowed him to spend two years in Morocco.¹ He retired early to a farm in Normandy and increasingly put meticulous detail, in the style of Dutch painters, into his work.

Guinard was a close friend of Sterling and Francine Clark and frequently lunched with the couple at their Paris apartment. After one such luncheon, Clark recorded in his diary that he and the artist talked at length about artistic matters. "Guinard thinks Van Dongen, Picasso, etc. school on the decline. We agreed some things by the Douanier Rousseau good by their naivete & sense of color and perspective but exaggerated on the market."² The conversation progressed to Clark offering Guinard both personal and professional advice, particularly that he focus his attention on painting "pictures of moderate size."³

This recommendation seems pertinent in respect to this painting, given to the Clarks by the artist in 1947. It was not until the late thirties that Guinard turned his attention from interiors and still lifes to portraits. This painting depicts the artist's daughter Nicole, and was probably painted in 1938, when she was five years old. Her features are partially illuminated by oblique light coming from an unrepresented window, leaving half of her face subtly shadowed. With the portrait came a letter from Guinard's wife, Marcelle, writing on her husband's behalf.⁴ The letter's contents explain the circumstances of the portrait, indicating that the picture was purposefully cut out of a larger canvas representing Nicole and her sister playing a board game, and noting that "the charm and liveliness of portraits by Fra Angelico, which are always cropped at the knees . . . comes from the figures always being painted full-length at first and then cut, so that the



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remaining fragment retains a much greater intensity."⁵ Guinard also believed Clark would like it due to its similarities with small portraits by Vermeer. JR

PROVENANCE The artist, given to Clarks, 1947; Robert Sterling and Francine Clark (1947–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined densely woven heavy-weight canvas (19 x 22 threads/cm) that displays moderate stiffness. The strainer is a four-member flat-surfaced pine frame with its half-lapped corners nailed together. The canvas is sparsely tacked to the wood, and several tacks are missing, resulting in a draw in the lower right. Frame abrasion and gesso debris appear on three edges. Paint on the lower and right tacking margins suggests that the image was cut down to fit this strainer. The paint layer is generally in good condition. In ultraviolet light, the ground layer fluoresces yellow, probably indicating the presence of zinc white pigment. The varnish is yellowed and was applied while the painting was framed. The surface reflectance is dull and uneven, and reveals the canvas texture.

The ground shows two layers, a putty gray color over white. This upper grayish tone is employed by the artist as much of the background color. No underdrawing or lower sketch layer was found. The final paint was quickly applied, as in a sketch, with thin blended paste-consistency strokes

and no glazes. There is an overall pebbly texture probably due to the canvas weave. The black signature is soft and fuzzy looking, and may have been painted into the varnish.

1. Bénézit 2006, vol. 6, p. 889.
2. RSC Diary, 29 July 1928.
3. Ibid.
4. Letter from Marcelle Guinard to Sterling and Francine Clark, 21 June 1947. See the Clark's curatorial file.
5. Ibid.: "le charme et la vie des portraits de Fra Angelico, toujours coupés aux genoux . . . venait de ce que les figures étaient toujours faite entièrement d'abord, puis coupées, ensuite, il reste une intensité bien plus grande dans la fragment gardé." A more recent letter from Nicole Guinard to Richard Rand, dated 14 May 2012, provided an approximate date for the picture and confirmed that she is the young girl depicted. With her letter she included a copy of a photograph on which the larger painting was based, showing the two sisters playing a board game, with Nicole dressed in the same white smock or dress over a dark top and wearing the same braids as in the present painting. See the Clark's curatorial file.

Dudley Hardy

English, 1867–1922

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Oil on panel, 24.1 x 16.5 cm

Upper right: SARAH. BERNHARDT. / DUDLEY. HARDY / PARIS / 1889.

1955.760

Inscribed and signed prominently on the diminutive panel, Dudley Hardy's 1889 portrait of Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923) stands at the intersection of the artist's graphic work, for which he was best known, and his paintings. His characterization of the most famous female actress of the day as a mannequin for a particularly dramatic couture confection links this work to his contributions to the illustrated magazines and posters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The nearly monochromatic palette reinforces this connection to Hardy's black-and-white oeuvre, while his stylized rendition of a well-recognized celebrity places him within the Art Nouveau movement of European design at this period.

Hardy himself argued that while graphic work and painting were by all accounts inimical, he believed

that their competing goals could be overcome. Conceding to Arthur Lawrence in the *Art Journal* of 1897 that "in persistently doing black-and-white work you may, perhaps, momentarily lose sense of colour," he counters that "if you really possess the instinct, you can get back to colour-work almost at once."¹ Hardy's self-confidence in his ability to control color is shown in his masterly handling of a limited range of hues to create a depiction at once ethereal and commanding of the Divine Sarah.

Seated on a cloudlike chaise, the actress twists her torso to face the viewer and to display her impeccable posture. Her extended left arm, resting theatrically on a polar-bear skin, draws attention to the artist's inscription, as well as to her elegant white above-the-elbow gloves. The frothy white jabot frames the delicate features of her face, which is crowned by her red hair. Shadowed by this dramatic chignon, her eyes barely peek out from the fringe, surrounded by a mysterious pool of darkness that contrasts with the cool lavender-tinted gray tones of her elegant dress. The gown's cascading train fans out at the lower edge of the image, elongating Bernhardt's famously slender frame even further. In a respectful way, therefore, Hardy highlights the features that were the source of parody in the numerous caricatures published in the French press.²

Although it is painted on a considerably smaller scale and shows her seated in isolation, Hardy's depiction of the actress positioned as if enthroned on a heavenly cloud calls to mind one of the most famous portraits of an actress, *Sarah Siddons as a Tragic Muse* by Sir Joshua Reynolds (The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino). The connection goes beyond composition as Sarah Bernhardt was in many ways the nineteenth-century equivalent of the eighteenth-century tragedienne.³ As Mary Louise Roberts has observed in her study of women in late nineteenth-century France, "More than a brilliant actress, Bernhardt was a spectacle herself."⁴

Indeed, the 2005–6 exhibition held at the Jewish Museum brought together not only a large selection of portraits of the actress in all media but also the costumes and accessories—even furniture—that enabled her to construct an opulent and exotic stage set for her life.⁵ Hardy, too, painted the actress a number of times. In an undated, more conventional three-quarter-view, bust-length portrait (Graves Gallery, Museums Sheffield), the actress's trademark red hair is covered by a broad-brimmed hat. Hardy once again sets the actress in a luxurious environment in a colorful full-length profile portrait (with the dealer