



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

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225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267
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Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications
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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
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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)

from—the 1872 Salon, *Death and the Maidens* by Puvis de Chavannes (cat. 257), an indication that an uncontroversial image like *First Love* would have been easily accepted at the time. JH

PROVENANCE Possibly sale, George Leavitt, New York, 2–7 Dec. 1872, no. 136; [N. Mitchell, London, sold to Clark, 20 Feb. 1935]; Robert Sterling Clark (1935–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Possibly Paris 1872, p. 157, no. 1036, as *Prémières amours*.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a finely woven, moderate-weight canvas (28 threads/cm), glue/paste-lined to a coarse, irregular thread-size canvas (16 threads/cm). The five-member pine stretcher, possibly replaced, does not look French, which suggests that the picture may have been lined in England by the dealer Mitchell or in New York after 1935. There is a weave impression caused by the lower lining fabric. A possible tear through the large leaf in the lower left corner would explain the need for lining. Blank margins left by the artist around the perimeter are now overpainted. There is some frame abrasion around the edges of the canvas, traction crackle in some green passages, and some cleaning abrasion in thinner background areas. Considerable retouching was seen in the dark paint around the figures, costumes, boy's hair, and parts of the background. The yellowed varnish has its own crack network and is shattering off in several areas. Patches of original varnish remain in a few zones, and the gloss is uneven in reflected light.

The ground is an off-white commercially prepared layer. No underdrawing lines were detected, although small charcoal deposits may indicate that a preparatory sketch once existed. Lines along the legs and hands appear to be an initial brownish paint sketch layer. The final paint film ranges from thin, wispy strokes and scumbles to moderately applied wet-into-wet layers. It is possible that the thumb and forefinger of the boy's proper right hand, now seen extending over the vest, were altered during painting. The signature along with some upper details may be executed in brown ink, and there is also evidence of the use of black ink.

Luigi Loir

French, 1845–1916

195 | At the Seashore 1870s

Oil and ink on beige paper, mounted on canvas,
34.3 x 52.7 cm
Lower right: L Loir
1955-795

196 | At the Seashore 1870s

Oil and ink on beige paper, mounted on canvas,
34.9 x 52.7 cm
Lower right: L Loir
1955-912

Born in Austria in 1845 to French parents, Luigi Loir was involved with the arts from an early age. At eight years old, he was enrolled in the school of fine arts in Parma, Italy, and he arrived in Paris ten years later, in 1863.¹ There he studied under Jean-Amable-Amédée Pastelot (1820–1870), whose studio was known for both genre scenes and theatrical set design. Loir's early work included designs for the theater, but it was his skill in representing daily Parisian life that established his reputation and later, in 1898, enabled his induction into the Legion of Honor.

Théodore de Banville, French poet and critic, once said: "Jéan Béraud paints the Parisians of Paris and Luigi Loir paints the Paris of the Parisians."² This particular Paris was one of rapid modernization. His street scenes show the changing face of the city—electric lamps, automobiles, and railroads. One of the industrial changes that the artist not only depicted but also was personally involved in was the growth of advertising. By the end of the nineteenth century, advertising was not simply an indulgence but a necessity. Merchants in Paris would call upon artists of differing reputations and fame to participate in their advertising efforts. Loir's fame as a lithographer, as well as his general public appeal, made him an ideal choice.

Loir first began producing marketing posters for the Lefèvre-Utile biscuit company in the 1880s and contributed to the fame of the company as well as his own popularity. The Pernot Biscuit company hired Loir sometime thereafter to create a series of postcards entitled "The Beaches of France," that depicted the

picturesque appeal of popular, often crowded, seaside locations, detailing some of the characteristic landmarks of each site.

Both of the Loir works in the Clark collection are entitled *At the Seashore* and are executed in a graphic style similar to the works in the Pernot “Beaches” series, if with greater detail. Both paintings depict three elegant women and three playful children on an unidentified beach. Portions of the beige-colored paper peek through the wider brushstrokes found in the clouds and waves. While his street scenes seem to focus on the atmospheric effects of flickering lamps and damp streets, here Loir’s attention has gone mostly to accurately illustrating the clothing. The figures’ accoutrements have all been outlined in either black or brown ink to allow the details to contrast more boldly with the looser brushstrokes of the scenery. This focus on the figures rather than on an identifiable—and marketable—location suggests that these paintings may have been intended for a different purpose than the postcard images, although they are equally appealing. Indeed, at least one of these two paintings (cat. 195) was reproduced as a chromolithograph titled *On the Beach*, which the Clarks purchased along with the painting; the print demonstrates that the image was in wider circulation.³

While these two works are not specifically mentioned, Loir’s name does appear, more than once, in Sterling Clark’s diaries. While shopping at M. A. McDonald’s New York gallery in 1942, Clark prided himself on being able to astutely recognize a “charmingly done” gouache as being a Loir, a feat that so impressed McDonald that the man “almost fell over.”⁴ It is also apparent that both Sterling and Francine were fond of Loir’s seascapes, as they purchased this pair of oil paintings, the chromolithograph, and the “charmingly done” gouache entitled *The Beach*.⁵ JR

PROVENANCE [Neuville & Vivien, Paris, sold to Clark, 3 Feb. 1938]; Robert Sterling Clark (1938–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Cat. 195: Williamstown–Hartford 1974, pp. 71–72, no. 42, ill.; Williamstown 1979c, no cat.

Cat. 196: Williamstown–Hartford 1974, p. 71, no. 41, ill.

REFERENCES Cat. 195: Lucie-Smith and Dars 1976, fig. 55.
Cat. 196: None

TECHNICAL REPORT Both paintings show a support of thick, wove beige paper, attached to a lightweight canvas layer,

now hidden and trimmed at the paper’s edge. A heavier weight canvas (13 x 19 threads/cm) and glue lining were added to both pictures in 1938 by Henri Helfer of Paris. The supports on both are now very taut. The five-member mortise-and-tenon stretchers may be replacements. It is likely that both pictures were also cleaned and retouched at the same time by Helfer. The paper surface of cat. 195 has a noticeable weave impression in the tent area. It also has a scratch through the yellow chair at the right and a repaired gouge in the lower right. There are flattened impastos on both paintings, while the white clouds and the hat’s red flowers on cat. 195 look melted from the lining process. The natural resin varnish layers on cat. 195 are more yellowed than on the companion picture. In ultraviolet light, both skies show extensive repaint, and on cat. 196 a large repair in the upper left quadrant may mask a tear in the paper. The signature of cat. 195 has been strengthened. Both surfaces display a mottled reflectance from uneven absorption of varnish into the paper support. Cat. 195 also has shiny patches in the clouds, which may be the result of smooth palette knife strokes whose gloss was enhanced during the linings.

There is no ground layer on either support, and the beige paper is visible throughout the images, particularly on cat. 196. On this picture wide, faint charcoal lines can be detected in many areas below the ink work at the edges of forms, suggesting that a brown ink sketch lies between the charcoal and the paint layers, probably on both images. An artist’s change is visible in infrared reflectography on cat. 195, where the beach covers a red bow on the back of the skirt of the child at the far left. The paint is applied on both images in a variety of ways, from thin washes to stiff paste consistency strokes, using brushes and palette knives, and the skies were painted after most of the figures. The paint is more vehicular and more densely applied on cat. 195. Blue, brown, and black inks were used as linear accents on both scenes, carefully matching the underlying oil paint to the closest ink color. Both are signed in the lower right corner in brown ink.

1. Bénézit 2006, vol. 8, p. 1180.

2. Quoted in Willer 2004, p. 22: “Jean Béraud peint les Parisiens de Paris et Luigi Loir le Paris des Parisiens.”

3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.2543.

4. RSC diary, 16 Nov. 1942.

5. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.1686.



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