



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME TWO

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

Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute is published with the assistance of the Getty Foundation and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The Getty Foundation



Produced by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267
www.clarkart.edu

Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications
and Information Resources
Dan Cohen, Special Projects Editor
Katherine Pasco Frisina, Production Editor
Anne Roecklein, Managing Editor
Michael Agee, Photographer
Laurie Glover, Visual Resources
Julie Walsh, Program Assistant
Mari Yoko Hara and Michelle Noyer-Granacki,
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,
Whately, Massachusetts
Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

© 2012 Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040
www.yalebooks.com/art

Printed and bound in Italy
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

Nineteenth-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / 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. Rogl an, James Rosenow, Zo  Samels, Fronia E. Wissman.

volumes cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-935998-09-9 (clark hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-300-17965-1 (yale hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Painting, European—19th century—Catalogs. 2. Painting—Massachusetts—Williamstown—Catalogs. 3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—Catalogs. I. Lees, Sarah, editor of compilation. II. Rand, Richard. III. Webber, Sandra L. IV. Title. V. Title: 19th-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

ND457.S74 2012

759.9409'0340747441—dc23

2012030510

Details:

TITLE PAGE: Camille Pissarro, *The Louvre from the Pont Neuf* (cat. 253)

OPPOSITE COPYRIGHT PAGE: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril* (cat. 331)

PRECEDING PAGE 474: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Onions* (cat. 280)

PAGES 890–91: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphis* (cat. 3)

(English ed., p. 368, as *The Guitar Player*); Hungerford 1977, pp. 237, 319, no. 70, fig. 93, as *Gentilhomme faisant de la musique*; Lyon 1993, p. 55; Hungerford 1999, pp. 101, 103, 108, 250n21, 251n27, as *Gentleman Making Music*; Terhune 2005, p. 59, fig. 44.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a mahogany panel 1 cm thick with rough saw marks and chamfered edges 0.6 cm wide on the reverse. The panel has a slight twist with the upper right corner gently turned back. There are cracks running perpendicular to the vertical wood grain, which reveal the gray ground layer. In 2010, the painting was cleaned to remove several layers of very shiny and discolored varnish along with old retouches, some of which filled wide and deep traction cracks. The painting was revarnished with a single brush coat of dammar resin to blend with a thin layer of the older natural resin varnish that was left on some areas. Inpainting was done below the chair as well as along the edges.

The ground is a thin pale gray layer, possibly applied by the artist. The panel grain can be seen through the ground in the background tapestry. A fine line underdrawing, probably in graphite, can be seen on close examination of the shoes and the legs of the furniture, although it is not detectable with infrared-sensitive equipment. There may also be a reddish brown paint sketch in some areas, the color of which shows below some brown passages. The brushwork is somewhat open and sketchy. The background is thinly painted, and much of the image is overly vehicular, contributing to a wrinkling problem.

1. For Demidoff, Aldolphe de Rothschild, and Meissonier's other collectors, see Hungerford 1999, pp. 96–110
2. For the relevance of absorptive motifs in French nineteenth-century painting, see the work of Michael Fried, especially Fried 1980, Fried 1990, and Fried 1996.
3. For Chenavard's advice to Meissonier, and a larger reading of the problematic it entailed, see Gotlieb 1996, pp. 64–67.
4. The entry for this picture in the Laurent-Richard sale of 1873 states that it had been part of the Bocquet collection. It has been suggested that this refers to Edward Bocquet of Brompton, England, from whose collection several works were placed at auction at Christie's London in 1863 and 1871, but this painting was not among those sold; further, Edward Bocquet died before 1863. It is unclear whether Bocquet or Demidoff was the first owner of the picture.
5. See Goupil Stock Books, book 15, p. 216, no. 29623.

213 | Jules Pelletier 1867

Oil on panel, 20.7 x 14.7 cm

Upper right: Le Président J. Pelletier / par son ami

E Meissonier [EM in monogram] / 1867

1955.811

Meissonier painted nearly fifty portraits, many of which were shown at the Salon, but he cannot be said to have practiced actively in this genre. A substantial number of his portraits were painted for members of his family and for friends, as in the case of the Clark's picture, painted in 1867, at the height of Meissonier's fame. In short, portraits constitute a relatively small number of his works, all the more striking given the immense demand for his pictures. Dominique Brachlianoff cites in this regard Meissonier's famous commitment to control over the motif, which must have run up against the need to accommodate or even flatter his sitters, not to mention adapting himself to their schedules.¹ Early in his career, nearly broke, Meissonier imagined he might throw himself into portraiture, but as his biographer Gréard noted, "Neither his talent nor his character was such as to fit him for the long probation of such a career."²

Despite these reservations, Meissonier was a brilliant self-portraitist, evincing an unexpected predilection for this introspective genre. His portraits subjects, too, command interest, but precisely not for the kind of introspective, psychological depth associated with the portraiture of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, for example, or with his own self-portraits. Rather, Meissonier's sitters typically betray a sense of forced immediacy or startled attention, vitiating against psychological complexity in favor of surface affect. The Clark's portrait of Jules Pelletier betrays this sense of startled attention. Pelletier's eyes seem slightly enlarged, as if he were staring or could not close them. Similar intriguing effects may be found across portraiture in the 1860s, notably in the works of Frédéric Bazille, Edgar Degas, and other painters associated with Realism and its aftermath. For Meissonier no less than for his more avant-garde peers, the sense of a frozen, eyes-open pose is traceable to the challenge to portraiture put in place by the new medium of photography.³ Photography's new protocols and routines around the subject's pose subtly transformed attitudes to bodily posture and affect within the painter's studio, even if those painters were not engaged with



213

photography per se. Just this sense of the sitter's discomfort, as if straining to be portrayed, contrasts with the affect and absorptive attitudes typically assumed by the readers, musicians, and other Ancien Régime figures so central to Meissonier's fame.

Son and son-in-law of distinguished chemists, Jules Pelletier (1823–1875) served as a senior official in the cabinet of Achille Fould, as secretary-general in the Ministry of State, and finally as president of a chamber in the *Cour des Comptes* (Court of Auditors). Meissonier probably completed the portrait when Pelletier held this last post, hence the inscription—"Président J. Pelletier / by his friend E. Meissonier." Pelletier also wears the

red neckband and gold badge of a commander of the Legion of Honor. Thanks to Pelletier's antiquarian interests, conviviality, and connections, he was elected in 1860 to the ninth seat in the unattached section for members not affiliated with an artistic field of the Academy of Fine Arts, where he doubtless forged his friendship with Meissonier and other members of the French Institute. The newspaper *Le Figaro*, upon Pelletier's death, described him as a character worthy of Balzac, due to his original manners, tastes, and habits: "in the morning he tired out a horse in the Bois, in the afternoon he worked in his office, and in the evening one saw him in the foyer of the Comédie-Française."⁴ MG

PROVENANCE Sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 22 May 1919, no. 80, ill., as *Portrait d'un Président de Cour*, sold to Knoedler, possibly as agent for Clark; Robert Sterling Clark (possibly 1919–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1958a, ill.; Williamstown 1959b, ill.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

REFERENCES Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 79, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fine-grained hardwood panel, 0.5 cm thick, possibly fruitwood, having an original wood extension 1.4 cm wide tenoned into the lower edge. The panel grain runs vertically, and the board has a slight convex warp which is somewhat restricted along the top edge by a wood framing spacer nailed into the end grain. The lower edge has frame abrasion, an old furrow in the paint from an earlier framing, and some fabric fibers in the surface. Although some abrasion can be seen in the black costume, the paint is generally in very good condition. An invoice dated 1935 from Chapuis and Coince of Paris probably records the last or only treatment the picture received, which appears to have been a partial cleaning and revarnishing. Examination in ultraviolet light shows that the face and hands were more thoroughly cleaned than the dark passages, and there are no obvious retouches. The upper natural resin varnish is a lightly fluorescing layer applied in both vertical and horizontal strokes, which provides an even light gloss to the image. Several pieces of very yellow undissolved resin can be seen below the medal of the sitter's costume.

The panel appears to be ungrounded, which, together with the type of wood, suggests that the source may not have been an artists' commercial supplier. The wood provides color and luminosity to the thinly painted background and costume areas, as well as to the eyes of the sitter. There is no detectable underdrawing, although there may be faint black paint outlines that were integrated into the final image. The paint is applied with small brushes in thin to moderate paste consistency with very low impastos in the whites and the medal.

1. Lyons 1993, p. 134.

2. Gréard 1897, p. 80.

3. For this kind of "staring" and other traces of the photographic pose in French painting, see Pitman 1998, pp. 83–116.

4. *Le Figaro* 1875, p. 1: "Le matin il fatiguait un cheval au Bois; l'après-midi il travaillait dans son cabinet, et le soir on le voyait au foyer de la Comédie-Française." Many thanks to Marc Simpson for identifying the sitter and locating his obituary.

Hugues Merle

French, 1823–1881

214 | *Mother and Child* c. 1864

Oil on canvas, 24.7 x 19.2 cm

Lower right: Hugues Merle

1955.808

215 | *Mother and Child* c. 1869

Oil on canvas, 24.6 x 19.3 cm

Center left: HMerle. 186[9?] [HM in monogram]

1955.807

Little known today, Hugues Merle was a widely popular artist in his lifetime. From his teacher Léon Cogniet he learned the fundamentals of careful draftsmanship and smooth paint application. He used these techniques in narrative and genre paintings that he exhibited at the Paris Salon from 1847 to 1880 and in smaller versions of those public works, such as the two paintings of a mother and child in the Clark collection. An assessment of Merle's career at his death was measured, yet just: "His paintings, somewhat waxy in the treatment of flesh and cold in color, but refined and academically correct, enjoyed great popularity in the United States, and specimens of his work are to be found in most American collections."¹ Paging through Edward Strahan's compendium of art collections in the United States confirms this statement. By 1879, when Strahan (pseudonym of the painter and critic Earl Shinn) published his survey, paintings by Merle formed part of collections in New York City, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, Providence, Rhode Island, and Hoosick Falls, New York.²

Motherhood was a particularly resonant theme in the nineteenth century. In France, an emphasis on domestic life can be traced back to the previous century, when Jean-Jacques Rousseau insisted on the value of educating children. This was augmented by the focus on private life as the counterbalance to the public life that sprang into being during the Revolution and its aftermath.³ The mothers in Merle's two paintings—dressed in a city dweller's notion of peasant costume, reminiscent of Italian rather than French custom—are carefully calculated to appeal to an urban market. Posed for by the same comely young woman, they are