



**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,
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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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over, the subject allows the artist to display his humor. The size of the wheels of the gig and the running dog contribute to the visual play of the miniature pony pulling a carriage carrying the elaborately dressed Mr. and Mrs. Brown. EP

PROVENANCE [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 13 Apr. 1927, as *Tom Thumb with Peter Brown and His Wife in a Gig*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1927–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1961.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fairly coarse fabric (thread count not accessible, possibly 13 threads/cm), with its tacking margins removed. The painting was glue-lined, cleaned, and repaired in 1940 through Durand-Ruel of New York, probably to correct two tears in the left sky. The picture was also treated in 1950 through Knoedler. Visible with infra-red viewing are a diagonal tear about 13 cm above the horse's head and another repair 5 cm in front of Mr. Brown. The lining fabric is a finer weave linen (19 threads/cm), and the replaced stretcher is made from a reddish colored, medium-density tropical hardwood. The dark age cracks are slightly cupped throughout the surface. The coating has its own crack system and is yellowed in vertical streaks. The left, right, and bottom edges are extended by fill and overpaint, which is shearing off from the tension caused by the glue on the brown-paper edge-tape. The painting is very damaged by solvents and was heavily reglazed in more than one campaign. The sky has darkened reglazing floating on the yellow varnish, applied to cover an earlier restoration layer that is now too white. The sky is now between twenty-five and fifty percent overpainted, and some details have been obliterated, such as the end portion of the coach whip, and edges of the figures and landscape. Nonetheless, the background and sky are very thinly painted, giving an appearance similar to a watercolor technique, and in fact the pale blue sky reglazing may have been done in watercolor, as there is some beading-up of this restoration, visible under low magnification. Some areas of paint appear to be underbound, or overly diluted, or perhaps are damaged by solvents. Close examination of details on the horse suggests that the artist may have used an intermediary varnish that would have made his upper paint layers very vulnerable to cleaning. The lower 2.5 cm of roadway is retouched, and the horse and the dark outlines on the dog are much strengthened. In reflected light, there is a weave impression, especially in the vertical direction, caused by the heavier original fabric.

The ground is not particularly visible but seems to be a cream color. There is a dark graphite underdrawing, very visible in infrared reflectography and to the unaided eye. Drawn lines from the carriage extend through the figures, and Mr. Brown's coat lines are particularly visible. There are unused

graphite lines in the sky and the notation "14 spokes" penciled in behind the carriage wheels. The faces are very quickly laid in and deftly handled. The decorative painting on the cart's wheels is executed in oil and ink.

1. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 11 Aug. 1816, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/1955/3258/67.
2. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 11 Jan. 1819, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/1955/3258/82.
3. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 6 Feb. 1821, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/3258/88.
4. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 1 June 1821, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/1955/3258/89.
5. Adams 1837, p. 245.

Paul Falconer Poole

English, 1807–1879

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Oil on panel, 25.7 x 21.6 cm
1955.832

Poole's evolution from son of a poor Bristol grocer to Royal Academician, honored posthumously with a retrospective at the Winter Exhibition of 1884, demonstrates the respectability available to Victorian painters by the middle of the nineteenth century. The two aspects of his oeuvre likewise encapsulate the dual challenge of earning a professional reputation and making a living. On the one hand, Poole was popular with collectors for his rustic scenes of women, while on the other, he gained critical attention exhibiting grander historical and literary scenes.

The theme of a mother nursing her child is typical of Poole in his rustic genre mode. In the case of the Clark's *Mother and Child*, the close physical and emotional connection between the subjects is emphasized with the mother's left arm drawing attention to the point of intersection. The suckling child's gaze beyond the picture plane engages the viewer in this Victorian version of a Madonna and Child. In this composition, Poole brings sensitivity to the sentimentality that pervaded much of Victorian painting of childhood and maternity.

Here, the mother encircles her child, her lap and right arm providing a human cradle. Poole emphasizes

her absorption with the elemental task of providing nourishment by the downward stretch of her neck and head, leaving the viewer with the merest glimpse of her delicate profile. Set against the womb-like backdrop of generalized clouds and sky, the painting idealizes the mother-child relationship, and it is easy to understand the popular appeal of such a work and Poole's reliance of the theme throughout his career.

Even in the large, solemn painting that created a sensation at the Royal Academy in 1843 and initiated his reputation as a painter of "bold, vigorous, manly, and original style"¹—*Solomon Eagle's Exhortation to Repentance during the Plague of the Year 1665* (Graves Gallery, Museums Sheffield)—Poole places a mother cradling her child directly below the dramatically posed title character. On the basis of this large-scale, multifigured work, as well as his other monumental exhibits at the Royal Academy, such as *The Visitation and Surrender of Syon Nunnery* (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery), he was first elected Associate of the Royal Academy in 1846. Poole attained full membership by just one vote in 1861. EP

PROVENANCE [Possibly Scott & Fowles, New York];² [Knoedler, New York; sold to Clark, 20 April, 1933]; Robert Sterling Clark (1933-55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a flat mahogany panel 0.5 cm thick, with the grain running vertically. There is a chamfer 2.5 cm wide along the bottom edge, and possibly a partial chamfer remaining on the right edge. The left edge was broken off before the panel was used and is very rough, and the right edge is wavy, both edges being so uneven as to add 1.3 cm to the width in the center of the board. These factors suggest that the support was cut from a larger board. There are a series of repaired splits, 1.3 to 5 cm long, running up from the bottom edge in the lower right corner, accompanied by compression cracks in the paint. Lesser compression cracks throughout the paint surface stem from the natural shrinkage of the wood across the grain. The right background area seems overcleaned. There is frame abrasion and gold leaf transferred onto the oval-shaped perimeter of the image. The natural resin varnish is discolored, and grime is trapped below the varnish layer. The ultraviolet fluorescence of the coating is moderately dense, and the retouches in the right background are muddy.

The ground is a thin, water-soluble gesso layer, which leaves the panel grain visible in some areas. Using infrared reflectography, a simple line underdrawing in charcoal can



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be seen around the outside oval and the figures. Under low magnification these lines can be viewed at the edges of a few forms, and charcoal particles can be seen dispersed in the paint layer. The paint was applied in thin to moderate thickness, in glaze-like applications, within a rough oval shape, leaving exposed ground in the corner spandrels. There are very low impastos in quite defined brushwork in the light and white painted details.

1. *Art Journal* 1859, p. 43.
2. There is a label on the back of the panel from Scott & Fowles that may indicate that the work passed through the gallery some time before Clark's purchase.