



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

**VOLUME ONE**

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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](http://www.clarkart.edu)

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Production by The Production Department,  
Whately, Massachusetts  
Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara  
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

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Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London  
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040  
[www.yalebooks.com/art](http://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. Roglán, James Rosenow, Zoë 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

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García y Ramos did not follow the preliminary drawing precisely, as the final painting omits three bullfighters and features the remaining figures in different poses, and it has far more spectators, most of them painted directly on the panel without preparatory outlines. Curiously, the drawing depicts three of the toreadors bearing the inscriptions “2,” “3,” and “4.” This numbering is perhaps related to the painter’s effort to establish some sort of order among the figures or perhaps as a way to identify them with the names of specific bullfighters. The preparatory drawing also shows a line on the left side of the composition that would have helped the artist with a sense of scale in his depiction of the figures. Technically, García y Ramos painted with precise care in order to depict every possible detail of the bullfighters’ elaborate costumes as well as the spectators watching from the tiers of the bullring. He reproduced the architecture with the same attention, outlining with mathematical precision the contours of the arcades, balconies, and barrier.

Closely related to this painting, probably a pendant, is García y Ramos’s *Outside the Bullring* (cat. 147). Both works complement each other although they are individually meaningful as well. One scene is based on the people of Seville entering the bullring while the other depicts a quiet moment during a bullfight. The paintings were probably done at the same time. MR

**PROVENANCE** [N. Mitchell, London, sold to Clark, 25 Oct. 1935]; Robert Sterling Clark (1935–1955); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1983a, no cat.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

**REFERENCES** None

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a pale-colored, close-grained hardwood, 0.8 cm thick, with the grain running vertically. On the back, it has the same steep, chamfered edges (1.9 cm wide) and the same oval stamp reading “Giosi Roma” as the companion (cat. 147). The panel has a slight twist, with the upper left and lower right corners lifted slightly. The reverse is thinly varnished. There are small drying cracks in the thicker white painted areas. There is also a fine-aperture network of square traction cracks, possibly initiated by tension from an older varnish layer. Apparently both paintings were cleaned and restored by Madame Coince in 1935, shortly after their purchase. The signature is somewhat abraded. The picture was cleaned of grime and part of its varnish in 1988. Thinness of the paint execution and sensitivity of the red color were cited as reasons for the partial

cleaning. The surface has a slightly speckled appearance due to an upper layer of sprayed Soluvar matte varnish. There is a small trail of retouches in the sky and along the top edge.

The off-white ground is a very slight wash over the panel’s surface. Short, dark flecks within the panel’s grain are revealed throughout the thin paint layer. Using infrared reflectography, the precise underdrawing is most decipherable in the thinly painted architectural elements. There are no changes within the image, despite the wealth of detail depicted. The paint handling is the same as that on the companion piece, wet-into-wet strokes of thin paint, with very delicate impastos. The wood’s color is used as a middle tone for some passages.

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1. For more about the history and architecture of the bullring of Seville, see Cossío 1964, vol. 1, pp. 550–54, and Morales et al. 1981, pp. 101–2.

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## 147 | **Outside the Bullring** c. 1880

Oil on panel, 28.6 x 17.8 cm

Lower left: García y Ramos / Sevilla

1955.838

In front of the bustling entrance to the monumental Door of the Prince (Puerta del Príncipe) of the historic Plaza de Toros de la Maestranza in Seville, a young boy sells bullfighting brochures and souvenirs. Behind him, two ladies holding fans wear typical Andalusian fashions characterized by long ruffled skirts and embroidered silk shawls. These women are being admired by a mounted picador behind them. Next to one of the columns that flank the entrance, a mounted lancer observes the crowd entering the ring. Inside the building, in the far background of the composition, the public is filling the tiered seats and an awning provides shade to a small section of the bullring.

Throughout most of his career, García y Ramos specialized in subjects of modern life in Andalusia, preferably scenes of his beloved hometown of Seville. In these often joyful views, the painter included identifiable elements from this particular region of Spain, such as flamenco dancing, regional costumes, and famous monuments and buildings. A contemporary British author wrote of his paintings: “He interpreted the light and romantic side of life, with an air at times of the old and brilliant chivalry so identified with his nation.”<sup>1</sup> In this work, García y Ramos chose to paint one of the



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most popular scenes of Andalusian life, capturing the rush of activity outside of Seville's historic bullfighting arena, one of the world's most distinguished bullrings. The Puerta del Príncipe, which García y Ramos only partially depicts, is located on the eastern part of the bullring, facing the Guadalquivir River. Traditionally, only the most successful toreadors are allowed to exit the arena by this door after an outstanding performance,

and they are generally carried out on the shoulders of an exuberant crowd. This historic entrance was completed before 1787, coinciding with the first construction phase of the building in the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

García y Ramos meticulously reproduced every detail of the architecture and figures in the composition with precise brushwork, an interest reflected even in the modeling of the letters that are carved

in the entrance to the bullring, which clearly reads “Plaza de Toros.” The crowd of people gathered at the entrance of the plaza permitted the artist to reproduce their dresses, fans, hats, and most importantly, their expressions, as some figures look directly out of the picture, inviting the viewer to be part of this festive event where people go to see and be seen.

This image was almost surely elaborated in the same manner as the other García y Ramos painting (cat. 146): the artist would have made a preparatory drawing on paper to outline the composition that would be traced onto the panel. This process furthers the understanding of how García y Ramos was able to achieve such accuracy in painting, with few significant changes made from the original composition.

The painting was probably finished not long after 1882, the year García y Ramos decided to reside permanently in Seville after accepting the position of President of the School of Fine Arts, a period in his career in which the artist specialized almost exclusively in these types of picturesque little paintings. The panel was sold on the international art market, where these kinds of works by García y Ramos were in notable demand. The British art critic Alfred George Temple commented on this interest in the early twentieth century, stating that “most of this painter’s pictures are in America, but there are by no means a few in England.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Sterling Clark acquired this painting in London. The subject of bullfights and bullrings, a theme so identified with Spain, and especially works related to the famous Plaza de Toros in Seville, attracted the attention of other prestigious American collectors such as William H. Vanderbilt, who wanted to commission Francisco Domingo Marqués, another artist represented in the Clark’s collection (see cat. 125), to create a painting representing bullfighters exiting this historic bullring.<sup>4</sup>

This painting is closely related to *Inside the Bullring* (cat. 146), and it was probably conceived as a pendant, as we find in other cases in the García y Ramos oeuvre. Although both works perfectly complement each other, they are individually meaningful and stand perfectly on their own. Each work reflects the intention of the artist, which was the depiction of a picturesque event in Seville, a location that he deliberately emphasized in these paintings by inscribing “Sevilla” underneath his signature. MR

**PROVENANCE** [N. Mitchell, London, sold to Clark, 25 Oct. 1935]; Robert Sterling Clark (1935–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1983a, no cat.; Williamstown 1988b, no cat.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.; Williamstown 1992a, no cat.

**REFERENCES** None

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a pale-colored, tight-grained hardwood panel, 1 cm thick, with the wood grain running vertically. The reverse has steep chamfered edges (1.9 cm wide) and is branded with a small oval label reading “Giosi Roma.” This panel is more in plane than the companion painting (cat. 146), possibly due to the thicker cut of wood. In general, the paint layer is in very good condition, with only minor cracks in the direction of the grain. There are some frame abrasions and scratches at the top and bottom edges. The signature, executed in brown ink, is in good condition. The varnish is shattering on the right side, where the wood’s shrinkage has caused compression cracks to form in the direction of the grain. There is also a varnish scratch in the red shawl of the center female figure, as well as in the fan of the woman behind her. It is believed the two paintings were cleaned in 1935 by Madame Coince. The varnish may be the original coating, or the cleaning was done with exceptional care, as there is no evidence of solvent damage in the thin dark paint details. The coating is only slightly yellowed and is slightly shinier than the coating on the companion scene. There are no retouches on the surface.

The ground is a thin wash of off-white color, yet more substantial than that on the other panel. The surface has diagonal abrasion marks, as if the artist sanded the ground to thin it further. The ground layer is visible throughout, and the underdrawing is easily detected on the architecture, and appears to be done in black ink. Using infrared reflectography, alterations are found in the drawing of the pediments over the side doorways, which were originally placed higher on the wall. There are also some changes to the position of the legs of the left-most horse. There seems to be a brown and black paint sketch below the final paint, visible at the edges and gaps in forms. The paint is vehicular, thin, and applied wet-into wet, in small, loose impastos. Black ink may have been used for some details.

1. Temple 1908, p. 91.
2. For more about the bullring and this emblematic entrance see Cossío 1964, vol. 1, pp. 550–54, and Morales et al. 1981, p. 101–2.
3. Temple 1908, p. 92.
4. Rodríguez García 1950, p. 39.