



**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

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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 Amphisa* (cat. 3)

charcoal line at the right edge of the panel, which may mark the cutting line. Roughness in the ground layer along this edge reinforces the possibility that the support is a section of a larger pre-primed panel. No underdrawing lines were seen, although there are thin reddish brown paint outlines discernible between the upper paint strokes. The image was executed with wet-into-wet paint, with no reworking. The tree leaves seem to be the only details added after the lower paint had set. The green pigment is grittier in particle size than the other colors.

Adolphe-Eugène-Gabriel Roehn

French, 1780–1867

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Oil on canvas, 32.4 x 41 cm

Lower left: Roehn / 1821.

1955.844

The pleasures of country living are shown in this charming painting of a village fair. A large group of people is gathered together in an outdoor area surrounded by several makeshift tents and stages near a church. The occasion is likely a harvest festival, given the produce-laden covered wagon at the far right of the composition. Near the wagon is a small stage on which a red-coated fiddler performs, entertaining the men drinking at a table set directly in front of the musician. A young couple, the girl wearing a pale blue dress, dances in the center of the scene, watched over by a heavysset man seated with a young child on his lap and another young woman seemingly waiting her turn to dance. Young lovers, seated on the ground near the stage at the right, seem oblivious to the activities surrounding them. At the far left of the scene, two actors are on stage in the guise of characters, likely Harlequin and Pierrot (or Gilles), from the *commedia dell'arte*. Nearby, a man sniffs a melon, while a young boy with a dog reaches into his pocket to pay for some apples offered by a woman holding a tray. Dozens of other figures cram the open space, some watching a puppet show while others observe two men onstage in the midst of some other kind of presentation. This is a painting that rewards close inspection by offering myriad details to enjoy.

Despite the contemporary aspect of the subject, the composition of this painting is rather classical,

with *repoussoir* elements at either side of the canvas, and the horizontal sea of people punctuated by several vertical elements, including the trees, some crosses, and a couple of men on horseback who rise above the crowd. The surface of the painting is smooth and rather slick, with little brushwork visible. The details of the scene are all carefully articulated, and the coloring of the picture is well balanced.

The painter of *Country Fair* is Adolphe Roehn, who was born in Paris and trained there as a painter and lithographer. His own father, a painter and a distinguished art restorer, served as his first master. Extremely long-lived, Roehn appears in the Salon records from 1799 (aged 19) through 1866 (aged 87, less than one year before his death). Roehn is best known today for nine scenes from contemporary history, several painted under commission directly from Napoleon Bonaparte, now at the Château de Versailles.¹ These paintings, such as the *Entry of Napoleon I and the French Army into Danzig, May 27, 1807* (painted 1812), most often were multfigured panoramic views not too dissimilar in composition to the Clark picture, despite their disparate subjects. Roehn's success afforded him an opportunity to travel extensively, and to collect early Dutch, Flemish, and Italian paintings and a variety of exotic objects, books, prints, and photographs.² Roehn was a notable drawing instructor at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, as was his son, Jean-Alphonse Roehn, who painted in a style similar to that of his father.

The early history of the painting, dated 1821, is unclear. Roehn did exhibit a painting of a village fair at the Salon of 1822, along with nine other paintings.³ Although the timing is right, it is unknown if the Salon painting is the same as the present picture, which may be a bit small in scale to have been shown at the Salon. It is likely that Roehn kept this picture until his death, as a painting whose description closely matches this one appears in the posthumous sale of the artist's possessions.⁴ When, where, and how the Clarks acquired the painting is uncertain, as there are no records of its purchase, nor is it mentioned in Sterling Clark's diary entries. κΡ

PROVENANCE Probably the artist's sale, Drouot, Paris, 2–6 Mar. 1868, no. 97, as *Une fête de village*; possibly Henri Perce, Montpellier; Robert Sterling Clark (until 1955); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Possibly Paris 1822, no. 1114, as *Une foire de village; vue prise dans les montagnes des Vosges*.



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REFERENCES Washington 1980–81, pp. 21, 85, fig. 3.

TECHNICAL REPORT The picture was originally executed on a fine-weave linen. In 1980, an old glue lining was removed due to disfiguring cupped cracks that marred the appearance of the picture. The painting was then wax-resin relined to three layers of fiberglass fabric and mounted to a small fiberglass-skinned aluminum honeycomb panel. This rigid support was chosen to hold down the cupping. The original off-square support was squared for a more convenient frame fit. No varnish removal was performed in 1980 due to a recent restoration containing many small retouches in the dark details. Only a grime layer was removed prior to adding varnish and several new retouches in the sky cracks and along the now-squared edges. The varnish is very slightly yellowed and in ultraviolet light shows a continuous pale fluorescence and scattered patches of older natural resin residues. There is evidence of old solvent damage below the many retouches in the left tree and dark foreground details, although the picture looks quite good. The signature and date in the lower left were applied in brown glaze, now very faint, possibly from overcleaning.

The ground is composed of several white layers, with a very smooth upper surface. In both infrared and microscopic examination, underdrawing lines can be seen in the fiddle player on the platform to the right and in the group of baskets in the lower left. Although a complete underdrawing was not detected, there appears to be a thin brown paint

sketch below the upper paint. The placement of the numerous details is very sure, with no changes in the image. The painting technique is primarily thin glazes and small color daubs blended into the lower thin paint. There are no impastos in the tiny brushwork.

1. Now at the Musée National du Château de Versailles et de Trianon. See Constans 1995, vol. 2, pp. 784–85.
2. As attested by the 2–6 Mar. 1868 sale of his possessions after his death.
3. Paris 1822, no. 1114: *Une foire de village; vue prise dans les montagnes des Vosges*.
4. Drouot 1868a, p. 38: “A great gathering of people fill a clearing surrounded by trees, drawn by the dancing, the drink sellers under a tent, and especially by the sideshows with players, one of which takes place in the left foreground.” (“Un grand concours de monde encombre une prairie entourée d’arbres, attiré par la danse, les buvettes sous la tente et surtout par les parades des Bateleurs dont une a lieu à gauche sur le premier plan.”) An old inscription on the reverse of the canvas reading “Roehn pere 1821 / Tableau Commande p M. Henri [P?]erce de / Montpellier”, however, suggests that a collector may have commissioned the painting, which might give it a slightly different provenance, but this cannot be corroborated.