



**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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EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1982b, p. 35, no. 34; Williamstown 1982d, pp. 69, 74, no. 61, ill.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a mahogany panel 1 cm thick with chamfered back edges 1.6 cm wide. The reverse is stamped “G & C 10014,” which may possibly refer to the colorman Giroux and Cie. The paint layer has scattered short vertical age cracks, and traction cracks in the thicker reds and some of the green strokes. There is a long black fiber embedded in the painted area above the signature. Minor wear and some compressed paint along the edges have resulted from framing stress. The painting was treated, and presumably cleaned, in 1937 by Henri Helfer of Paris. The varnish has a thin ultraviolet light fluorescence over all, with possible retouchings below the varnish in the face and floor. The varnish is damaged and delaminating in the blue wall section to the left of the fan, including a row of clustered dots shaped like a number six. A V-shaped scratch in the varnish mars the mirror frame, and there are a few deposits of undissolved resin on the surface. The coating is shiny and even in reflectance, and, in general, the picture appears to be in good condition.

The ground is a commercially applied off-white layer. No underdrawing was found, except for a possible line around the globe shade in the lamp, together with its reflection. There may also be a warm-toned imprimatura layer over the upper half of the image. The paint is vehicular in consistency and was applied wet-into-wet with small brushes in unblended strokes, creating a fair number of low level, fluid impastos. The artist may also have used black, brown, and blue inks for details in the black lines in the red couch upholstery, and the thin blue lines on the wall.

Théodore Rousseau

French, 1812–1867

297 | Road in the Jura c. 1830 or possibly c. 1834

Oil on wove paper, mounted on canvas, 21.7 x 32.7 cm

Lower left: TH. R

1955.847

The historian who tries to place the oil sketch entitled *Road in the Jura* in the context of its author’s career faces several stumbling blocks. Given to Théodore Rousseau, it has no verifiable provenance before 1936, when Robert Sterling Clark bought it from F. and J. Tempelaere. Michel Schulman did not include it in his cata-

logue raisonné of Rousseau’s painted oeuvre. A date of about 1860 has been assigned to the work,¹ although it may date more than twenty-five years earlier, from Rousseau’s trip to the Jura in 1834, if it is in fact by Rousseau, and if it actually depicts a site near Switzerland.² Such conflicting opinions and lack of knowledge unfortunately characterize the state of scholarship on one of the greatest landscapists of the nineteenth century. The attribution to Rousseau is strengthened by the presence of the red wax seal embossed “ThR” on the central vertical member of the stretcher. Although it is not clear who affixed these seals, according to Schulman, the majority of paintings with this seal are authentic.³ The power of the small landscape suggests its author was an artist of keen observation and great skill, and the present writer sees no compelling reason to remove it from Rousseau’s oeuvre.

The painting was executed in a single campaign, in response to the observed scene. Forms were painted directly, with no underlying armature; only the outline of the ridge at the right was drawn with graphite before applying paint. To be able to look down on the curving road, the artist chose an elevated vantage point, perhaps setting his easel and stool on a hill corresponding to the one visible at right. An elevated perspective connotes mastery, both literal and figurative, even of such a simple subject as near and far hills, a road, and some trees. Contributing to this sense of visual command is the series of subtle oppositions within the painting that balance each other and result in a sense of rural tranquility. Oranges and ochers of the hillside make the greens of the foliage more intense. The slim verticality of the poplars in the middle distance emphasizes the sinuosity of the road. The haphazard tumble of stones at the base of the hill finds its opposite in the regularly placed stones to the left of the road, whose cleft faces catch the sun. In like manner, the planar quality of the farthest hill throws into relief the feathery foliage in the foreground, especially that of the low plants that line the ridge at right.

Rousseau must have thought that this sketch did what he wanted it to do, for he considered it finished and signed it with his monogram in the lower left.⁴ The question of finish was debated throughout the nineteenth century. Critics either inveighed against pictures they regarded as unfinished and therefore unworthy of public display or championed artists whose quickly done scenes were infused with their personalities and responses to nature. Rousseau had something to say on the subject. “What finishes a



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painting,” he told his student Ludovic Letrône, “is by no means the quantity of details, it is the accuracy of the whole. A painting is not limited only by the frame. No matter what the subject, there is a principal object that your eyes continually rest on; the other objects are there only to complement it; they interest you less; after that, there is nothing more for your eye; that is the true limit of the painting.”⁵ In *Road in the Jura*, the principal object is, in a way, nothing. That is to say, the motif to which the eye returns is the middle distance, the funnel of space created by the road, flanked by the stands of trees to either side, and terminated by the row of poplars. Sketching this road, hills, and trees allowed Rousseau to study the effect of distance within circumscribed terrain. That done, he deemed the sketch finished.

As with so many landscape paintings, it is not possible to determine where this one was made. The clarity of light and color of the soil argue against a site in the Île-de-France. A locale farther south suggested itself to the dealers Tempelaere, who sold the painting to Clark with the title *A Road in the Jura*. The Jura, bordering Switzerland, is an option. Another option is the Auvergne, in the middle of France. Rousseau’s father came from that region, and the title of Rousseau’s submission to the Salons of 1836 and 1838 was *Paysage du Jura* (now known as *The Descent of the Cattle*, The Mesdag Collection, The Hague). A painting entitled *Landscape in the Auvergne* and dated to 1830, although showing a wider panorama, nonetheless offers cognates in terms of trees and general

topography.⁶ A date of 1830 or 1834, coinciding with Rousseau’s trips to the Auvergne and the Jura, respectively, is more probable than a later date, but this, too, is open to further consideration. FEW

PROVENANCE Possibly the artist (until 1868, his sale, Drouot, Paris, 27 Apr.–2 May 1868, possibly no. 92 bis);⁷ [F. & J. Tempelaere, Paris, sold to Clark, 23 Jan. 1936, as *Une route dans le Jura*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1936–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1958a, ill.; Williamstown 1959b, ill.; Huntington–Baltimore–Memphis 1990, p. 55, no. 63, ill.

REFERENCES Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 138, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a wove paper, formerly glue-/paste-lined to a moderately fine-weave linen (22 threads/cm) and mounted to a small-gauge, five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher, whose corners had been immobilized with small brads. The mounting was quite old, possibly dating to the original sale of the picture, and had created a weave impression in the paper layer. Madame Coincé of Paris probably cleaned and restored this picture in 1936. There was solvent abrasion where the foliage extends into the sky and along the tops of the weave impression. Old tears through the paper in the lower left road area and left edge had been inpainted. Because the paper was delaminating from the canvas, the secondary mounting was replaced in 2005. The lining canvas and old adhesive were removed, and the paper was then lined with wheat starch paste to a new Japanese Okawara paper support. A stamp for the dealer F. and J. Tempelaere and the number 9549 on the reverse of

the old mounting were preserved. The original strainer was adjusted with a thin solid support layer, covered in linen. The natural resin varnish was also removed. New varnish was applied and inpainting was done to correct the abrasions and a number of small damages to the surface.

The paper support appears to be grounded and has striations running horizontally across the surface, which may reflect the ground application technique, a smoothing tool's marks, or the weave impression. During the last treatment, a graphite inscription "39" was noted on the reverse of the paper support. Under low magnification, a slight graphite line is visible along the ridge of the hill at right. No other underdrawing lines were seen. The paint is applied in thin, vehicular strokes, with tiny, very low impastos.

1. Huntington–Baltimore–Memphis 1990, p. 55.
2. Simon Kelly, e-mail message to the author, 4 Jan. 2006.
3. Schulman 1997–99, vol. 2, p. 46.
4. F. and J. Tempelaere considered the "TH. R" in the lower left to be an estate stamp. Michel Schulman, e-mail message to the author, 23 Dec. 2005, stated not only that the monogram, which is badly abraded, is a false one but that the way the painting is made is not consistent with Rousseau's method. Countering this opinion is that of Sandra Webber, who treated the painting in 2005. Although a number of works Robert Sterling Clark bought have signatures that were added by hands other than the artist's, this painting, in Webber's opinion, does not fall into that category. Webber, e-mail message to the author, 5 Jan. 2006.
5. Quoted in Burty 1868, p. 317; name of student courtesy of Thomas 2000, p. 95, and translation taken in part from Thomas 2000, p. 102. The original French reads: "Ce qui finit un tableau, ce n'est point la quantité des détails, c'est la justesse de l'ensemble. Un tableau n'est pas seulement limité par le cadre. N'importe dans quel sujet, il y a un objet principal sur lequel vos yeux se reposent continuellement; les autres objets n'en sont que le complément; ils vous intéressent moins; après cela, il n'y a plus rien pour votre oeil; voilà la vraie limite du tableau."
6. Paris 1967–68, p. 4, no. 4.
7. None of the 92 paintings individually listed in the artist's posthumous sale catalogue (Lugt 30487) seems to match this one, though no. 92 bis is described as "some studies and sketches painted on paper" (quelques études et esquisses peint sur papier) and might include this work.

298 | Farm in the Landes (La maison du garde)

1844–67

Oil on canvas, 64.8 x 99.1 cm

Lower right: TH · Rousseau

2009.8

In the summer of 1844, Theodore Rousseau visited the remote region of the Landes in southwestern France. This visit inspired one of his most important paintings, *Farm in the Landes*, on which he worked intermittently for approximately two decades until his death in 1867. The artist's biographer, Alfred Sensier, described the picture as "the most elevated expression of his [Rousseau's] art."¹ *Farm in the Landes* served as a crucible for the artist's experimentation with facture and particularly his concept of "universal modeling" whereby the modeling of form, and especially tree form, was placed within a broader metaphysical context. Although Rousseau visited the south of France only on this single six-month visit from April to October 1844, the painting serves as luminous testament to his fascination with the intense light of the region and complicates the view of the artist as a "northern landscape-painter," as first articulated by Charles Baudelaire.² Despite its significance within Rousseau's career, *Farm in the Landes* had been thought to be lost, until it was rediscovered in a Portuguese private collection in 2000.³

Farm in the Landes represents a farm complex (known within the Landes region as an *airial*) in the vicinity of the small village of Bégaar, just a few kilometers north of the Pyrenees and the border with Spain. Although the Landes was best known in the mid-nineteenth century for its desolate marshy expanses, Rousseau focused here on the extreme south of the region where he found more fertile land populated by scattered farms and impressive oak trees. A path leads the eye toward a red-tiled farmhouse past a tall, thatched barn, probably used as a hayloft, in the foreground right. A peasant woman tends cows in the farmyard while, close by, a man fixes a wagon wheel alongside a child. Two ducks and a dog provide further picturesque additions. According to Sensier, Rousseau was impressed by this "rustic Eden" where "man, animals, trees, pastures, fields abounded in a primitive beatitude."⁴ The subject of the work has been discussed as reflecting the artist's "general tenor of conservative nostalgia for a vanishing rustic