



**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

*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. 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)

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

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

The owner up to 1918, however, has been identified by the Matthiesen Gallery as François, vicomte de Curel (1854–1928), Marie-Albert’s son. This suggests that Marie-Albert never owned the painting, but that François de Curel included it in the 1918 sale of his father’s collection. Note that the sale was postponed from 3 May to 25 Nov. 1918.

28. Tauber lent this painting to the exhibition organized by the French government in 1939 that traveled to South and then North American museums (Buenos Aires and others 1939–46). Tauber died before the end of World War II, and when the painting returned from Washington, it was restituted to his heir, Monsieur Baveret. For further details see Matthiesen Fine Art 2009.
29. No. 600 in Paris 1889b is titled *Maison de garde* while no. 611 is titled *La Ferme dans les Landes*. Dayot 1890, p. 107 and Lafenestre 1900, p. 385, annotate no. 611 as having been in the Salon of 1859, but they also state that no. 611 was lent to Paris 1889b by Tabourier, while no. 600 was lent by Mme Hartmann. Based on this information, the Clark painting is likely to be no. 600 and not no. 611.
30. Misidentified as no. 2640 in the 1859 Salon, which is the source of the title *Bornage de Barbizon*.

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**299 | The Farm (Cottage at the Edge of a Marsh)**  
c. 1860

Oil on panel, 21.8 x 29.2 cm  
Lower left: TH. Rousseau  
1955.849

It has become a commonplace to invoke landscapes of seventeenth-century Holland when discussing the paintings of Théodore Rousseau, Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña, and Constant Troyon, and for good reason. In their interest in depicting their native countries, both groups of artists validated the local at the expense of the foreign and the present at the expense of the past or the imaginary. Because the seventeenth-century model was ever present for the nineteenth-century painters, pictures like *The Farm* must be seen through a scrim of precedent.

Rousseau owned a painting by Jan van Goyen, which he had his pupil Ludovic Letrône copy before allowing him to paint out of doors. Rousseau spoke often of Rembrandt van Rijn, Meindert Hobbema, and Claude Lorrain, Letrône reported to Philippe Burty. The painting by Van Goyen was used to teach the student about space. Van Goyen, Rousseau said, “did not

need a lot of color to give the idea of space.”<sup>1</sup> Nor did Rousseau. Like the seventeenth-century Dutch, Rousseau was able to suggest a vast expanse of undistinguished marshy terrain. The enormous sky makes everything beneath it seem small. The thin paint in the fore- and middle ground functions as an analogue for the equally thin, watery ground, more mud than soil. A path cuts across the foreground, skirting open water. Along it walks a solitary woman, her small size emphasizing the immensity of the space.

The woman’s destination is the cottage with smoking chimney to the left, sheltered among trees. It is the end of the day. Clouds are tinged pink by the setting sun, which backlights the tree in the left foreground. Although it is a peaceful scene, the enormity of the space, the tininess of the woman, and the isolation of the cottage suggest the inconsequence of human presence on earth. This is what Greg Thomas calls Rousseau’s “ecological vision,” wherein “people appear to be peripheral participants in an ideal, self-ordering, organic network of interdependent natural processes.”<sup>2</sup> Even when people are present in Rousseau’s paintings, they serve a symbolic rather than a narrative function. The woman here, in conjunction with the cottage and its smoking chimney, represents domesticity. The tiny size of her person and the position of the cottage among trees underscore the elements that are truly important, the huge vault of the sky and the breadth and depth of the land. Mankind and the built environment find their places in the immensity of nature as best they can.

Such a removal of humankind from the center of artistic and intellectual focus was necessarily melancholic. Charles Baudelaire understood the emotion Rousseau’s landscapes evoked:

*It is as difficult to interpret M. Rousseau’s talent in words as it is to interpret that of Delacroix, with whom he has other affinities also. M. Rousseau is a northern landscape-painter. His painting breathes a great sigh of melancholy. He loves nature in her bluish moments—twilight effects—strange and moisture-laden sunsets—massive, breeze-haunted shades—great plays of light and shadow.*<sup>3</sup>

But whereas Baudelaire appreciated the sadness implicit in Rousseau’s depiction of the inexorability of nature, he sometimes failed to see the radicalness of Rousseau’s achievement:



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*M. Rousseau's manner of working is complicated, full of tricks and second thoughts. Few men have had a sincerer love for light, or have rendered it better. But the general silhouette of his form is often difficult to grasp. His luminous haze, which sparkles as it is tossed about, is upsetting to the physical anatomy of objects. . . . And then he falls into that famous modern fault which is born of a blind love of nature and nothing but nature; he takes a simple study for a composition.*

As if the critic-poet were describing this painting, he goes on:

*A glistening marsh, teeming with damp grasses and dappled with luminous patches, a rugged tree-trunk, a cottage with a flowery thatch, in short a little scrap of nature, becomes a sufficient and a perfect picture in his loving eyes. But even all the charm which he can put into this fragment torn from our planet is not always enough to make us forget the absence of construction in his pictures.<sup>4</sup>*

The accusation of an “absence of construction” is a curious one. *The Farm* is closely related to *The Pond near the Road*, *Farm in the Berry* (Musée d’Orsay, Paris). The two paintings share the huge sky, trees to either side, diagonal path leading toward a cottage under trees, and the audacious emptiness of the central distance. A “fragment torn from our planet” perhaps, but one whose deep void is counterbalanced by the leftward-leaving backlit tree and rock in the left foreground and the luminous, reflective water, which pulls the eye toward the front after it has plunged into a distance far greater than any Van Goyen painted.

It is possible that this small painting, which we see largely as Rousseau painted it, without the distortions of subsequent cleanings or restorations, is the one of which Robert Sterling Clark gleefully wrote in his diary, “the Rousseau is a perfect picture.” A month later he was still overjoyed with it: “What a Jewel!”<sup>5</sup> FEW

**PROVENANCE** [Boussod, Valadon, Paris]; Mary J. Morgan, New York (d. 1885, her sale, American Art Association, New York, 4 Mar. 1886, no. 142, as *Landscape*, sold to Garland); James A. Garland, Boston (1886–d. 1906, his sale, American Art Galleries, New York, 19 Mar. 1909, no. 5); [Knoedler, New York]; Edwin H. Fricke, Calistoga, Calif. (until 1945, his

sale, Parke-Bernet, New York, 15 Mar. 1945, no. 13, as *La Ferme*); Robert Sterling Clark (probably 1945–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1959b, ill., as *Landscape*; Williamstown 1984a, p. 65, no. 94, as *Landscape*.

**REFERENCES** Hoerber 1915, ill. opp. p. 236, as *La ferme*; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 137, ill.; Schulman 1997–99, vol. 2, p. 308, no. 598, ill., as *Chaumière au bord d'un marais*.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is an oak panel 1 cm thick with chamfers 1.9 cm wide along the back edges. The panel has a slight convex warp, and the grain runs horizontally. In reflected light, the wavy striation of the wood grain can be clearly seen through the paint. There are scattered age cracks in the colors containing white pigment and cracks in the varnish running perpendicular to the wood grain. There is no evidence of any cleaning damage; the paint layer is in nearly untouched original condition. The ultraviolet light fluorescence of the natural resin varnish is thin and may have a second coating applied over the original varnish. De Wild may have cleaned it in 1945, perhaps only removing grime and adding varnish. The surface is quite shiny, and there are a few retouchings along the top edge, probably covering old frame abrasion.

The ground is a moderately thin white commercial layer. It shows through the under-sketch and the final colors. There may be a sketch done in dark brown paint, which remains as part of the finished paint layer in the trees and the dark passages of the foreground. The upper colors are applied in a loose, open manner, with low, soft impastos in the sky and in some details. The water in the foreground was laid in after the surrounding dark paint, and the sky color was applied after the trees, with feathering used to blend the outlines of the foliage.

1. Burty 1868, p. 317: "Celui-ci, disait-il, n'a pas besoin de beaucoup de couleur pour donner l'idée de l'espace."
2. Thomas 2000, pp. 7, 2.
3. Baudelaire 1846; translation from Mayne 1965, p. 109.
4. Baudelaire 1859; translation from Mayne 1965, p. 196.
5. RSC Diary, 14 Apr. and 18 May 1945.

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**300 | Landscape with Cows and Oaks** c. 1860

Oil on panel, 17.5 x 26 cm  
1955.848

Théodore Rousseau was a man who listened to "the voices of the trees, the surprises of their movements, their varieties of form, and all the way to their singularity of attraction toward the light," all of which revealed to him "the language of forests."<sup>1</sup> This sympathy for trees, verging on anthropomorphism, can be seen in the majesty with which the artist endowed these largest of plant forms. Four massive trees, plus several smaller ones, combine to dominate this sunny view. They are oaks, grown from acorns carried to the field from the trees that terminate the view into the distance. Reddish brown cows, small under the oaks, graze in the orbit of these trees, their herder in a blue smock an even smaller element. The subtle touches of reddish brown set off the greens of the trees and foreground and the blue of the sky. In radiating a sense of warmth and bucolic peace, this small painting, full of color and light, pictures the French countryside as a place where man, his activities, and nature function as a harmonious unit.

Trees for Rousseau symbolized ongoing nature, a realm apart from the quotidian affairs of commerce and cities. "The tree that rustles and the heather that grows is for me grand history, that which will not change; if I speak their dialect well, I will have spoken the language of all times."<sup>2</sup> An aspect of this unchanging story is the pastoral. Rousseau evoked the classical past, and hence the entire construct of the pastoral as it was understood in the nineteenth century, in letters to his friend and biographer, Alfred Sensier. In 1863, he sent Sensier a sketch of a place they had seen during one of their walks through the Forest of Fontainebleau. "It seems to me," Rousseau wrote, "that Homer and Virgil would not have considered it beneath them to sit there, to dream of their poetry, in the place where I have indicated a figure."<sup>3</sup> "Here is a little sketch," the artist wrote at another time, "in remembrance of our walks in the old part of the forest that we called *Arcadia*, all still vibrating with the sound of ancient poetry."<sup>4</sup>

These comments reveal Rousseau's eagerness to place his art in the venerable tradition of the pastoral. In tandem with this avowed adherence to tradition went a deep-seated conservatism. Having discovered