



**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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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)

nants in the sky, are shinier in reflected light, which suggests that they are residues of the old natural resin varnish.

The ground is a commercially prepared off-white layer. No underdrawing was found. The water and sky zones were done using very different techniques, with paint in the sky apparently extended by brushing out the strokes with a clean dry brush. The lower third of the picture was made with thick vehicular paint. The paint in the foreground is several layers deep, with all the lower colors showing through skips in the upper layers. Some subtractive tool was used in the foreground, possibly a palette knife, which scraped through the paint exposing the lower paint and ground layers. The ship masts were applied after the paint in the sky and the water had hardened.

1. Laughton 1971, p. 103.
2. *Times* 1942, p. 6.
3. The chronological list of places Steer painted is among his papers held by the Courtauld Institute and published by D. S. MacColl as Appendix G in MacColl and Yockney 1945, p. 186.
4. Other paintings of Harwich from 1913–14 with similar dimensions are *Misty Evening, Harwich* (Manchester City Art Gallery) and *Sunset, Harwich Harbour* (Blackwell Family Collection). For the complete list, see MacColl and Yockney 1945, pp. 214–15.
5. London 1910–11 and London 1912.
6. Kenneth McConkey addresses the influence of Constable and Turner on Steer as well as on other English Impressionists, dating the emergence of English Impressionism to the 1890s in London–Dublin 1995, pp. 55–56, 82.
7. Viscountess Esher, d. 1940, was the wife of Reginald Baliol Brett, second Viscount Esher (1852–1930).

Adolphe-Charles-Édouard Steinheil

French, 1850–1908

313 | **The Bibliophile** c. 1890

Oil on panel, 24.8 x 16.5 cm

Lower right: A. STEINHEIL

1955.859

This painting previously carried an attribution to Louis-Charles-Auguste Steinheil (1814–1865) but is instead by his son and pupil.¹ Both father and son worked in a similar style, derived from that of Ernest Meissonier (cats. 211–13), the well-known history and genre painter. In fact, Meissonier married Louis

Steinheil's sister Emma, and the two painters spent their early careers working together.² In addition to paintings, Louis Steinheil created book illustrations and stained-glass designs, and helped restore the stained glass at the cathedrals in Paris, Strasbourg, and Bourges.

Like his father and uncle, Adolphe Steinheil had varied antiquarian interests that carried over to his artistic output. Many of his paintings show the world of courtiers and cavaliers garbed in costumes of earlier eras, such as *The Connoisseurs* (private collection), wherein three stylish seventeenth-century gentlemen examine a drawing within a well-appointed salon.³ When the younger Steinheil did execute history paintings, they were not drawn from recent military history, as were Meissonier's Napoleonic battlefield scenes, but derived from an earlier age, as in the *Death of Richard the Lionheart* (Salon of 1881; location unknown).⁴ Steinheil exhibited his works at the Salon in Paris regularly during the 1880s and 1890s, and received a bronze medal at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. He also dabbled in portraiture and Orientalist subjects.

In this tiny painting, a scholar sits before a table with ornately carved wooden legs, transcribing, or perhaps translating, from a sheet of paper. He is bearded, and wears a long black robe with a white collar. Numerous books line the shelves behind him, and a large tome is propped open before him on the table. The scholar, as he seems to be, sits near a window since some light penetrates the otherwise dark study. The overall feeling of the picture is one of quietude, peacefulness, and timelessness, for the era depicted is not readily apparent, either by costume or decor. It is not possible to assign a date to this painting, but it is likely from the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The painting's subject, style, and even its scale are derived from the work of Meissonier, such as his *Painter Showing His Drawings* (1850; Wallace Collection, London) or *Man Reading* of 1851 (cat. 211).

Steinheil met an untimely death in 1908, when he and his wife's stepmother were asphyxiated to death at the family's home in Paris. Marguerite, his young wife, found alive but gagged and bound to her bed, claimed that burglars were responsible for the crimes. She was ultimately charged with the murders, but acquitted after a scandalous trial that exposed her many sexual liaisons, including an affair years earlier with none other than Félix Faure, president of France.⁵ Soon after the sensational trial, Adolphe Steinheil's

belongings, including many paintings, were sold at auction, where they fetched relatively small sums, perhaps due to, or in spite of, the notoriety of the recent events.⁶ KP

PROVENANCE [Galerie J. Allard, Paris, sold to Clark, 9 Aug. 1935]; Robert Sterling Clark (1935–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1958a, ill.; Williamstown 1959b, ill.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a prepared mahogany panel 1.1 cm thick, bearing the impressed brand of the English colorman Rowney and Co. The reverse is painted gray, and all but the left back edge have shallow chamfers 2.2 cm wide. The panel was cut down after preparation, which may explain the unusual wood-grain orientation, running horizontally to the vertical image. The panel is twisted from lower left to upper right, with a raised portion on the left center edge and a wavy appearance when viewed from the end grain. The surface has frame abrasion. There are narrow traction cracks in the black robe and parts of the chair. The painting was cleaned and treated by Madame Coince in 1935. The brush-varnished natural resin, which is pooled at the edges, presents a smooth surface, but is cracked, dry, and breaking down physically. There is some dullness in the lower left corner. The coatings show a moderately dense fluorescence in ultraviolet light, with evidence of a residual layer on the black robe, which was presumably sensitive to solvents. There is evidence of retouching in the upper back wall, near the left edge of the table, and possibly strengthened lines dividing the shelved books.

The ground is comprised of several commercially applied off-white layers having a smooth surface. Scratch marks visible below the paint surface suggest that the artist sanded the ground before painting. There may be a brown ink sketch over very cursory graphite underdrawing. The paint technique is quite vehicular throughout the image, with very small strokes in the sitter's head and hands. The table finish was created with thin transparent layers and translucent details painted in a reserve left for them on the surface. The signature may be executed in brown ink.

1. The identities of father and son have long been conflated, and they are still merged in Castagno 1990, p. 671, wherein Louis-Charles-Auguste Steinheil is attached to the signature A. Steinheil. The father went by Louis rather than using the middle name Auguste, and thus signed his works either L. Steinheil or with his surname alone, while the son (Adolphe) used A. Steinheil as his signature.



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2. Hungerford 1999, pp. 15–17.
3. This painting, signed but undated, was on the American art market in 2010.
4. Sold Drouot, Paris, 28 Sept. 1999, no. 81.
5. Madame Steinheil was also implicated, although not officially, in Faure's death in 1899, as the president was rumored to have died in her bedroom at the house she shared with Adolphe Steinheil and her stepmother, rather than in the presidential chambers at the Elysée Palace, as the public record indicated. See "Apogée et Mort Subite de Félix le Bel" in Lanoux 1983, among other sources.
6. The sale took place on 19 Dec. 1909, with no catalogue published. Although Sterling Clark did not purchase the present painting until 1935, he would have undoubtedly been familiar with the scandal involving Madame Steinheil that took place in his adopted city of Paris some years earlier.