



**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

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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

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)

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 Amphis* (cat. 3)

the picture was varnished, the tears filled, and extensive inpainting was done to visually pull together the old cleaning damages. Some of the lower layer of old varnish was left in place on the hair of the sitter. The flesh areas had been more solidly painted and remain in better condition.

The white ground layer was applied after the canvas was stretched, as evidenced by the fabric cusping seen around the edges, so the canvas may have been primed by the artist. Although bold outlining paint strokes are visible in the jacket, no separate underdrawing was detected in infrared light. An obvious change in the image appears in the final color of the waistcoat, which was painted a buff color after it had been painted black.

1. See correspondence in the Clark's curatorial file. While the painting maintained the attribution to Géricault in Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, it was published as French School in Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1970, and this attribution has remained to the present.
2. See correspondence in the Clark's curatorial file.
3. For Gros's self-portraits, see paintings at the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse (inv. 109) and the Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon (inv. 5081). Coincidentally, in Gros's portrait of Count Alcide de la Rivallière, the sitter holds a similar double-ended chalk holder.
4. Musée du Louvre, inv. 2182. The canvas at the Louvre is one of a number of similar works, including the present painting, that for many years were attributed to Géricault. See Bazin 1987–97, vol. 2, pp. 329–31, nos. 10–14.
5. See Drouot 1876a, pp. xi–xii: “d’une extrême fidélité de sentiment et de couleur. Elles expriment, sous une forme sommaire et réduite, la maîtresse qu’elles reproduisent, avec son tempérament, son cachet, sa saveur individuelle. Pour qui a vu, c’est une fleur de souvenir; pour qui n’a pas vu, une note juste, une indication certaine.”
6. For Colin's copy of Vernet, see Paris 1993, pp. 10–11, no. 12.
7. Bazin 1987–97, vol. 4, pp. 202–3, no. 1368. On Dollfus and his collection of Impressionist paintings, see Distel 1990, pp. 151–55.
8. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, 1955.948.
9. Robert Sterling Clark to Paul Lewis Clemens, 7 Dec. 1950, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute Archives, Williamstown.
10. The painting was offered for sale at Drouot, Paris, 12–13 May 1892, no. 56, as *Son Portrait par lui-même*, by Géricault, but was bought in.
11. The dimensions are given as 26 x 21 cm. As noted in Bazin 1987–97, vol. 2, p. 330, it is not clear whether this is an error or refers to a different painting.

Artist unknown

French, 19th century

369 | **Cocottes** c. 1850–70

Oil on panel, 16.7 x 12.3 cm

1955.881

Cocottes is an alluring picture of two ladies in a theater box. They are fashionably dressed and adorned with fancy necklaces and earrings, which are shown to advantage thanks to both women's upswept hair. Everything about their manner, from their clothing to their position at the very front of the box, indicates that they have gone out more to be seen than to enjoy a theatrical performance. This notion is further supported by the direct eye contact and provocatively suggestive pose of the woman on the right. Though her gloved hand rests on a pair of opera glasses, these are presumably used more often to discern members of the audience than the action on the stage. Likewise, it is not hard to imagine that the oblique gaze of the woman on the left is directed at the gathered crowd.

While the author of *Cocottes* is unknown, the artist Émile Boilvin (1845–1899) has been proposed.¹ Although he is more famous for his later output as a printmaker and illustrator of works by Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880) and Rabelais (c. 1490–1553), Boilvin began his career as a genre painter. In his paintings, Boilvin was especially fond of light pastel blue costumes similar to the dress worn by the woman on the left in the present picture. Furthermore, there is a damaged and unreadable signature in the lower right corner of *Cocottes* in which one can discern an “o” followed later by “in.”²

Sterling Clark appreciated small genre paintings and might have been particularly drawn to *Cocottes* for its theatrical setting. Clark's wife Francine was a former actress, who had been a member of the prestigious Comédie Française for six years. It is unknown exactly when Clark acquired the painting, as the first record of its existence in his collection is a bill from Knoedler for reframing the painting in 1949. It is telling, however, that even at this point, when he had already amassed the majority of his collection of Impressionist masterpieces, he was still fond enough of a small genre scene such as *Cocottes* to have it put in a new frame. DC



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PROVENANCE Possibly Georges Muller, Paris (by 1928);³ Robert Sterling Clark (by 1949–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a panel (0.6 cm thick), possibly a lightweight softwood, which is slightly wider at the top than across the lower half. There is an unusual slightly concave warp, and spacers have been nailed into the panel on all four sides to center the image in a frame. The reverse is coated possibly with a ground layer and with varnish. A label reading “Nettoyage de Tableau 9 Rue Caumartin, Paris téléphone 304-55” suggests that a cleaning was done prior to 1949, when Knoedler Gallery applied the framing spacers to the front. The black inscription in the lower right appears to be a long name and is only partially legible due to sol-

vent abrasion. There are traction cracks in the face of the left woman and possible solvent abrasion in the thin brown hair. There are several thick brush coats of varnish with undissolved resin scattered in lumps across the surface. The ultraviolet light fluorescence is moderately dense, and its presence on the spacers suggests that the picture was revarnished in or after 1949.

The presence of ground material covering the reverse and the odd concave warp to the front side (which is normally convex with aging) suggest that the artist may have painted on what was initially the reverse of a panel. The ground on the painted side is off-white, of indeterminate thickness. Sanding or abrasion marks are visible through thin or transparent paint areas. Some black underdrawing can be detected in the figures using infrared light, and scattered particles in the paint suggest charcoal as the medium. Some changes in the paint are visible in the hair of the two women. There is also a thin brown paint sketch visible throughout the figures, along the edges of forms.

1. The Boilvin attribution was proposed by Charles Cunningham in a letter of 6 Oct. 1975 and again in a memo of Jan. 1976, both of which are in the Clark's curatorial file.
2. See Sandra Webber's conservation report of Dec. 2004, in the Clark's curatorial file.
3. Georges Muller's ownership of this painting is tentatively suggested in the unpublished manuscript "List of Paintings in the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sterling Clark," which was compiled about 1970. See the Clark's curatorial file.

Artist unknown

French, 19th century

370 | Woman Seated at a Dressing Table

c. 1850–1900

Oil on panel, 21.4 x 17.2 cm

Lower left: G. Courbet.

1955.530

This small panel was purchased by Sterling Clark as a work by Gustave Courbet. Given the lack of historical information about it, its condition, the questions regarding the signature, and its relation to the rest of the artist's work, however, the attribution cannot be supported. Very little additional information can be determined concerning the names supplied by Knoedler's invoice to Clark for the provenance. A sale of works in the collection of a Madame Lederlin in 1933 did not include this painting, and while a Dr. Voillemot is known to have owned a work by Géricault in 1924, nothing further is known about him.¹ Since *Woman Seated at a Dressing Table* was reproduced twice, in publications of 1921 and 1925, it was presumably in a relatively well-known collection, and it is therefore conceivable, if unlikely, that "Beaumont" refers to Count Étienne de Beaumont (1883–1956), a costume designer, contemporary art supporter, and member of high society. The name is relatively common, however, and Étienne de Beaumont's tastes are unlikely to have encompassed this type of work.

Before the painting was acquired by Clark, its surface had been abraded during cleaning, and it still reveals extensive retouching in the figure as well as in the background. Most notably, the current signature

appears in an area that is clearly problematic, and examination reveals that it lies on top of previously damaged paint, indicating that it was added after the rest of the painting had been completed. Furthermore, in the only two sources to publish the work, André Fontainas's *Courbet* (1921) and Giorgio de Chirico's *Gustave Courbet* (1925), it is illustrated with an image that bears a very different signature, one that slants forward rather than the current backward-slanting script. This throws further doubt on the signature, supporting the idea that it was applied at a late date, presumably after the publication of the two books. Finally, while nearly all of Courbet's signatures are either upright or slanted backward to a greater or lesser degree, like the one now on the panel, it would be unusual for the artist to sign such a small and informally painted work at all. Taken together, the evidence suggests that the signature on the present work cannot be considered original.

Even if the issue of the signature is set aside, the subject matter and treatment of *Woman Seated* is still uncommon in Courbet's oeuvre. Most of the small-scale images of individuals published in Robert Fernier's 1977–78 catalogue raisonné are bust-length portraits or studies presented against neutral backgrounds, rather than the highly simplified setting and studio props seen here. One of the closest comparisons might be to a small portrait, also painted on panel, of *Marc Trapadoux* (c. 1849; Musée d'Art Moderne de Troyes), in which the sitter appears among objects that probably did belong to Courbet's own studio.² But this is explicitly a portrait rather than an anonymous genre scene, and the small size of the panel in Troyes, which at 40.5 x 30 cm is still much larger than the Clark panel, is the result of Courbet producing a reduced version of a work he had exhibited at the Salon of 1849 (private collection), presumably at the request of a collector.³ Moreover, the handling of the Trapadoux portrait appears to be somewhat more refined, with less visible brushstrokes and greater detail in the surroundings. Comparison might also be made between *Woman Seated* and some of Courbet's images of women of the 1860s, such as *Reflection* (1864; Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai) or *Woman with Jewels* (1867; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen), but these differ again in being larger, bust-length images that emphasize the sensuality of the sitter, a quality that is entirely absent from the Clark painting.⁴ Alternatively, *Woman Seated* might also recall numerous paintings by Camille Corot in which the sitter is shown at full length and dressed fairly elaborately, seated in an