

**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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[www.clarkart.edu](http://www.clarkart.edu)

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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 Amphis* (cat. 3)

red reflectography, seems to include the letters “leny gu ne.” There has been no treatment of the picture since it entered the collection. There is some frame abrasion, primarily along the top edge, and a scoring line along the lower edge. Many small cleaning abrasions are visible on the tops of the grainy surface texture, including the signature. A thin, slightly discolored layer of natural resin varnish stops short of the lower edge, probably indicating that the picture was varnished while framed. There is extensive retouching throughout. Odd white highlights on the dress are old retouches scumbled over cracks and old varnish trapped in the paint. Under ultraviolet light, there seems to be something else near the signature, although this is not visible under magnification or using infrared equipment. In reflected light, the gloss is uneven, and the grain of the panel is more visible due to the grouping of the extensive small paint losses.

The ground is a thin, off-white layer that follows the wood grain. Charcoal dust dispersed at the edges of forms suggests that an underdrawing was used, and some lines can still be seen in the dress folds. Infrared reflectography reveals the line for the sitter’s rounded hairstyle extending further into the background. A dark brown paint sketch is also visible in the head of the sitter and along the edges of forms. In general, the final paint is sketchy, and applied in fluid, paste-consistency strokes. The green costume detailing was added after the dress paint had set. The floor was painted after and around the chair, and the background was painted after the figure, possibly after the latter had dried. Some of the dark details may be executed in ink. Under low magnification, large particles of white pigment can be seen scattered in the dress and background. The signature sits partially on plowed-up paint in the lower left corner.

1. Lederlin sale, Galerie Jean Charpentier, Paris, 22–23 Mar. 1933. For the Géricault, see Bazin 1987–97, vol. 3, pp. 154–55, no. 744.
2. F 98. See Paris–New York–Montpellier 2007–8, pp. 150–51.
3. Paris–New York–Montpellier 2007–8, p. 151. The Salon painting is F 96. It has been suggested that there may have been two versions of *Woman Seated*, which might account for the different signatures, but there are essentially no discernible differences between the early twentieth-century reproductions in Fontainas and De Chirico and the present work, although the two books do not give the dimensions of the work reproduced, and the quality of their reproductions is not good.
4. F 430 and 626.
5. R 1426 and 1559.
6. An attribution to an Italian artist such as Silvestro Lega (1826–1895) has also been considered, but no convincing determination can be made. See correspondence in the Clark’s curatorial file.
7. The early provenance is from the Knoedler invoice of 1950. See the Clark’s curatorial file.

## Artist unknown

French, 19th century

### 371 | Artist in His Studio 1877

Oil on panel, 41.6 x 27.3 cm

Lower right: [an ankh-like symbol] / 1877  
1955.883

Identifying the subject, maker, and history of *Artist in His Studio* presents considerable challenges, as the picture raises more questions than it answers. Very little is known about the painting that Sterling Clark purchased as *In the Studio* by an unknown artist from the dealer Wallis & Son in 1931. Wallis & Son ran a franchise known as the French Gallery in London and in cities throughout Scotland. T. Wallis, Edward Silva White, and W. L. Peacock were the directors and sold modern nineteenth-century French art by artists such as Charles-François Daubigny, Gustave Courbet, and Théodore Rousseau. They also mounted exhibitions of young Scottish artists.<sup>1</sup> There is very little further information about the French Gallery or its records, and the history of the picture before 1931 cannot be traced.

Virtually all that is known about the painting are the identities of the bronze sculpture on the stool and two of the three plaster sculptures on the shelf above the men. In 1975, then-curator at the Louvre Pierre Rosenberg identified the sculpture on the stand as *Fisherman Dancing the Tarantella* from 1832 by Francisque-Joseph Duret (1804–1865), of which the Louvre has an example (fig. 371.1).<sup>2</sup> Anne Pingeot, another Louvre curator at the time, provided the early history of the statue. It was cast in bronze by Honoré Gonon and his sons, shown at the Salon of 1833, acquired for the king in the same year, and exhibited at the Musée du Luxembourg until December 1874, when it entered the Louvre. A subsequent letter from Pingeot mentioned that this famous sculpture by Duret probably inspired Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse as he later made a pair of sculpted figures in a similar pose, the *Neapolitan Dancers* (modeled c. 1855).<sup>3</sup> The popularity of *Fisherman Dancing the Tarantella* lasted for decades, as replicas of the piece were sold, and the artist showed the work again at the Exposition Universelle in 1855, winning a Medal of Honor for the sculpture.

The three plasters in the upper part of the picture have been identified as Hellenistic in origin. The left-

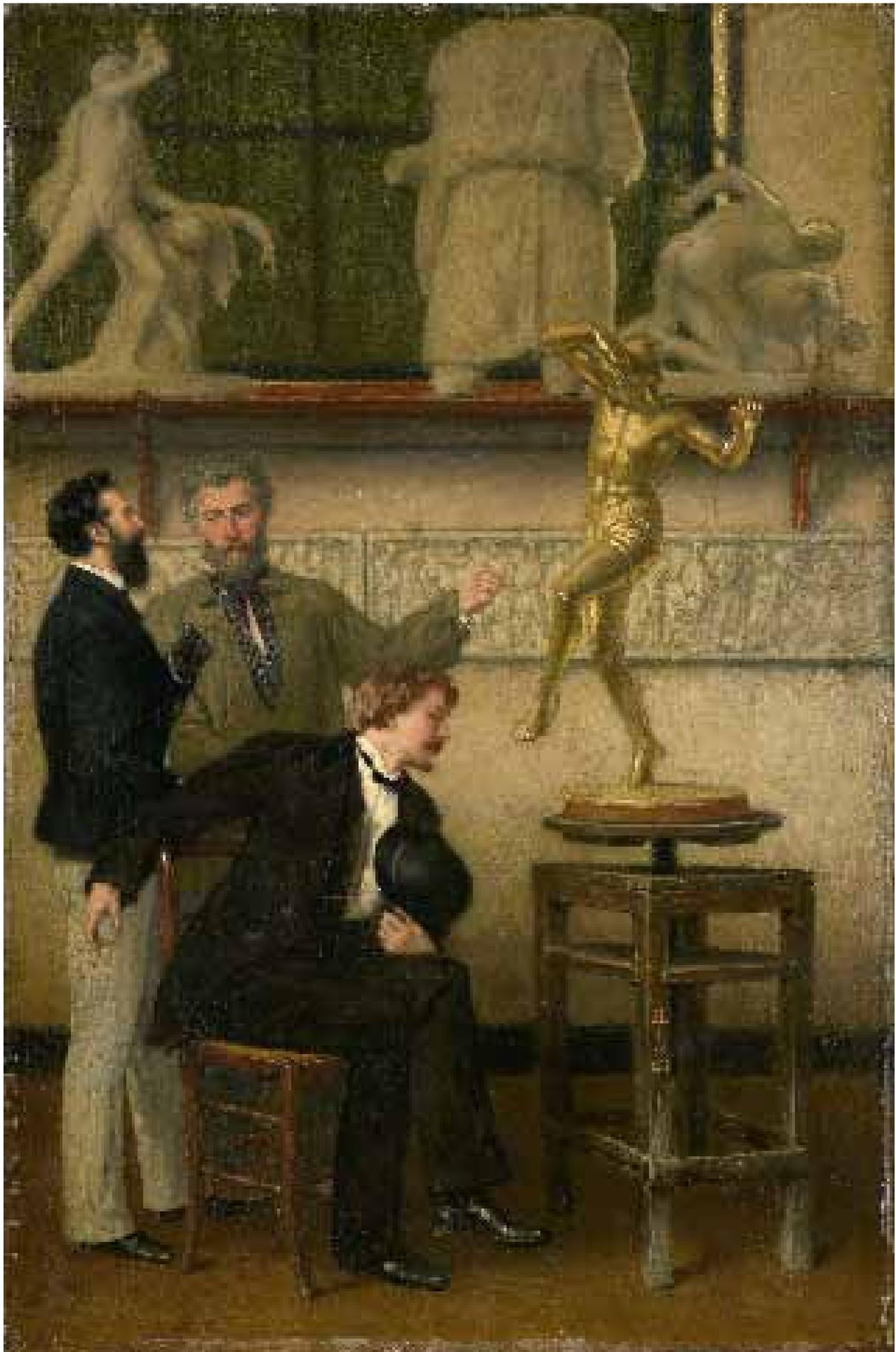




Fig. 371.1 Francisque-Joseph Duret (French, 1804–1865), *Fisherman Dancing the Tarantella*, 1832. Bronze, 158 cm (height). Musée du Louvre, Paris

most is the plaster version of *Gaul Killing Himself and His Wife* (Museo Nazionale, Rome), a Roman copy after a Hellenistic marble of a man plunging a sword into his chest, holding the dying figure of his wife with his left arm. The plaster at right is a version of *Wrestlers* (Uffizi Gallery, Florence), a Roman copy after a lost original Hellenistic bronze of the third century B.C.E. depicting two male athletes. Both Hellenistic sculptures are widely known, prime exemplars of late classical form, proportion, and heightened emotion. The central plaster, a male figure, although not specifically identified, is most likely Hellenistic as well. These are just the sorts of models that a sculptor might keep in his studio as a source of inspiration. Indeed, a more specific relationship can be drawn between the Duret bronze and the plaster copies, since its pose can be

traced to a Hellenistic figure of a dancing satyr.<sup>4</sup> Taken together, the sculptures create a progression of movement across the canvas as if one work were being turned so as to see it from several different angles. The two-part horizontal relief on the wall has not been identified, although Julius Held surmised that the subject might be Christian because of what appears to be a Madonna and Child with a male figure behind the bend in the central man's arm.<sup>5</sup>

The three living figures in the picture are similarly difficult to identify precisely. The middle figure clearly wears an artist's smock and dotted scarf, and gestures toward the bronze as if discussing or explaining it. The other two men are dressed more elegantly and gaze appreciatively at the sculpture, the standing figure at left holding what appears to be a monocle while the seated man holds a bowler hat. The visitors could be patrons, critics, or friends, but the relationship between the men is not completely clear. Given the plasters, the presentation of the sculpture on a rotating pedestal as if recently finished, and the large windows covered with shades, the setting is surely an artist's studio, rather than a commercial gallery or foundry.<sup>6</sup> Because of the close connection between the artist and the *Fisherman Dancing the Tarantella*, it has been suggested that the central figure in the picture is Duret himself. The sculptor, however, died in 1865, twelve years before the 1877 date painted brightly in red on the leg of the stool, and there is no clear reason for an artist to paint a posthumous picture of Duret with a sculpture he made decades earlier. Moreover, nothing about the condition of the paint surface suggests that the 1877 date was added later. In addition, as Held noted, the fashions are consistent with those of the 1870s.<sup>7</sup> Since *Fisherman Dancing the Tarantella* was widely reproduced, the artist associated with it here may not be intended to represent Duret; perhaps he is simply indicating yet another copy, like the nearby plasters. The version of the sculpture in the Louvre measures 158 cm in height, while the version shown here is probably 100 to 120 cm high, given its scale relative to the men in the picture.<sup>8</sup> From Anne Pinget, we know that there were four different-sized versions of the sculpture, but she noted that although it was a famous work, she did not understand its inclusion in a picture of 1877.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the strange symbol painted above the date on the stool's leg only adds to the mystery about the possible maker of the picture. The symbol, a modified Egyptian ankh with a circle at the bottom, is untraceable thus far, though it is most likely

an artist's monogram, or perhaps bears some relation to the content of the painting.

Although this symbol has not provided any clues, several artists have nonetheless been suggested as the possible maker of this work. Pierre-Auguste Cot (1837–1883) was a student of Duret's as well as his son-in-law, and one possible explanation of the picture's subject is that Cot painted it for Duret's daughter in memory of her father.<sup>10</sup> In this case, perhaps the scene is set in 1832, just as Duret completed his soon-to-be-celebrated work. Certainly Cot's academic training would have given him a thorough knowledge of classical art, though this work is not entirely in keeping with the high finish and grand scale of a painting like Cot's *The Storm* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Another possibility is the painter Paul-Marc-Joseph Chenavard (1807–1895), who knew Duret's friend and profiler Charles Blanc. Chenavard himself bore a striking resemblance to the central figure in the painting, with a beard and strong profile, but his work generally focused on complex philosophical and historical themes—ideas that might link him to the ankh-like symbol—painted in a traditional style that often referred back to Michelangelo, far different from the contemporary anecdotal approach of the present painting. Thus, neither of these artists seems convincingly linked to *Artist in His Studio*. Despite numerous attempts at interpretation of its many details, this painting remains largely a mystery. KAP

**PROVENANCE** [Wallis & Son (The French Gallery), London, sold to Clark, 23 Mar. 1931]; Robert Sterling Clark (1931–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1981b, p. 48, no. 25; Williamstown 1994b, pp. 34–35, 73, no. 36, ill.

**REFERENCES** None

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a mahogany panel 1.3 cm thick with a very slight convex warp and a vertical grain. The reverse is coated with resin, and there are chamfers 1.6 cm wide along the back edges. A small chunk of wood is missing from the lower left corner, and a repaired 6.4-cm break can be seen in the upper left. There is a small dent in the panel in the upper right, and a few traction cracks appear in the green. Only the varnish has age/compression cracks, more extensive in the upper left portion. There is some edge wear and wrinkling from framing pressure. It is possible that the picture has never been cleaned, having had only minor retouching and a second coat of varnish added. The varnish layers are thick and yellow, with a dense enough

fluorescence to hide the obvious darkened retouch along the repaired panel crack, and possibly others which may be between the coatings. In reflected light, the varnish appears crizzled and has some wrinkling, and some cracks are turning white from brittleness. A scratch in the varnish goes through the shirt of the seated man.

The warm cream-colored ground is made up of several layers, which present a smooth surface. No underdrawing was found using infrared and microscope examination, partly due to the paint thickness. Scattered pinholes in several corners and to the left of the date may suggest that a drawing was used to transfer the image to the panel. The paint film is a very rich, detailed, and multi-layered surface, applied primarily in vehicular strokes, with glazes, some scumbles, and tiny impastos. Highlights are built up in numerous layers, some possibly floating between glaze or varnish layers. Black ink appears to have been employed for details such as the narrow necktie. The artist's smock was originally dark blue and his black necktie was once bright red. The background area in front of the hat in the seated man's hand is wrinkled and disturbed, with dark paint below, suggesting a possible artist's change in this location. Small old losses in the floor suggest that the color was initially darker and green, and small areas of interlayer cleavage in various locations were noted in 1983. The dark brush hairs embedded in the paint are consistent with the finer sable brushes needed to apply such a wealth of detail.

1. See Louisville and others 2002–4, p. 205.
2. Letter in the Clark's curatorial file from Pierre Rosenberg, 6 Nov. 1975.
3. Letter in the Clark's curatorial file from Anne Pingetot, 8 July 1976.
4. Williamstown 1981b, p. 35.
5. Note from Julius Held in the Clark's curatorial file, 4 Dec. 1979.
6. Williamstown 1981b, p. 35.
7. Note from Julius Held in the Clark's curatorial file, 4 Dec. 1979.
8. Ibid.
9. Letter in the Clark's curatorial file from Anne Pingetot, 17 Dec. 1975.
10. See John Stamper's unpublished paper in the Clark's curatorial file, 16 Dec. 1975, p. 4.