



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME ONE

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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(Baltimore–Tulsa 2007) includes an insightful essay by Kelly on Barye’s paintings as well as informative catalogue entries.

5. Of the ninety-nine oils included in the 1876 estate sale, sixty-two are identified as “*Forêt de Fontainebleau*” and another twelve are identified as “*Intérieur de forêt*.” William R. Johnston reports that seventy-three paintings were found in Barye’s cottage in Barbizon after his death. See Johnston 1974, p. 405.
6. *Jaguar Discovering a Snake* (Brooklyn Museum).
7. *Tigre couché*, oil on wood, 25 x 30 cm. For a reproduction, see Montebello Fine Art 1993, p. 11.
8. *A Tiger on the Platform of Its Cage* (Musée du Louvre, Paris).
9. *Study of a Lioness Reclining, Paws Facing Out* (location unknown). For a reproduction of this work, see Drouot 1956, p. 33, no. 4.
10. Including the Clark work, there are at least six known paintings that correspond to the title *Tigre au repos*: a canvas measuring 51 x 121 cm in the Louvre (RF 1956-10); the Thaw oil sketch, the Wadsworth Atheneum oil, the Swiss private collection oil (all roughly 25 x 32 cm); and a canvas measuring 48.7 x 114 cm at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. Based in part on size, it seems most likely that the latter four paintings correspond to those sold in the Barye sale, where three are listed with measurements of roughly 25 x 32 cm and one of 49 x 115 cm.

Jan van Beers

Belgian, 1852–1927

11 | Woman in Evening Dress After 1882

Oil on canvas, 27.4 x 35.6 cm

Lower right: A L'AMI CANONNE / JAN VAN BEERS
1955.888

Jan van Beers, the son of a Belgian poet laureate, was born in Antwerp in 1852. Beers began studying at the age of seventeen at the Antwerp Academy of Art, and initially painted grand historical subjects.¹ In 1876, he won a gold medal in Amsterdam for *The Funeral of Charles the Good* (Petit Palais, Paris), in which hundreds of twelfth-century figures mourn their beloved king. When Beers moved to Paris about 1882, his style changed with his new surroundings. He found that painting charming Parisian women was not only enjoyable, but also profitable.² Beers painted fantasy pictures as well as portraits and landscapes. He exhibited regularly at the Salon and at special exhibitions organized at the galleries of Georges Petit and Durand-Ruel. Though he was diverse in his production, the public adored Beers’s miniature pictures of the chic side of urban life.³

This painting depicts a woman standing in front of a large stone building. Unabashed, she faces the viewer and shows off her elegant clothes. She delicately holds the edge of her fur or feather-trimmed cape with outstretched arms, putting herself on display for an unseen audience. The low neckline and thin straps of her dress reveal the alabaster skin of her chest and arms. The train of her pale yellow dress has been pulled forward to flaunt the sumptuous fabric. Her black hair, almond eyes, and accoutrements stand out against the predominantly white canvas. A feather or tuft of hair emerges like a black flame from the large bun on top of her head. The woman's flushed face and smiling red lips add color to the otherwise subdued palette. A monumental building with large classical columns separates the woman from another space where two men accompany a horse-drawn carriage (these two faceless men seem disproportionately large). The buildings, drawn with thin, precise lines and little detail, resemble a schematic architectural drawing and serve as a theatrical backdrop for the peacocking of Beers's young Parisienne. The artist was fond of white and preferred to compose his paintings using very few colors.⁴ In this instance, however, the varnish on *Woman in Evening Dress* has yellowed and distorted its original appearance. The sky in the upper left was initially blue, for example, though this color is now barely visible because of the pervasive discoloration.

This painting is typical of Beers's later work in size and subject matter. By the mid-1880s, Beers had settled into his new French life and was in the process of building a splendid house near the Bois de Boulogne. He had a keen interest in architecture and worked collaboratively with his architect in the building of his home.⁵ Beers clearly translated his interest into the architectural drawing in the painting. Likewise, Beers extended his attention to detail into women's fashion. He was aware of the rise and fall of clothing styles and had dresses of his own design made for his sitters.⁶

It is likely that this painting was sold at Christie's in 1930 as *Ready for the Fête*. As such a title indicates, the woman in the painting is prepared to sparkle as the center of attention at an elegant public affair. KA

PROVENANCE Possibly sale Christie's, London, 17 Mar. 1930, no. 120, as *Ready for the Fête*, sold to Joseph; [Scott & Fowles, New York, sold to Clark, 1 Mar. 1943]; Robert Sterling Clark (1943–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS New York 1943b, no. 99.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a finely woven canvas (approximately 28 threads/cm), giving the illusion of a twill weave on the surface. The picture's glue or paste lining is a bleached, heavy weight, double-weave fabric (13 double threads/cm), which may have been done between 1930 and 1943, perhaps by Beers Brothers of New York. The five-member, narrow-gauge stretcher is original, but the artist's tacking margins are missing. The severely discolored varnish and the gray and brown grime between coatings, perhaps lining-glue residue, suggest that the picture was not cleaned at the time of lining. The painting has the appearance of a partially colored drawing, with very visible line work. The impastos are moated and flattened by the lining heat and pressure, and there are age cracks scattered throughout. There is considerable abrasion in the horses and architecture, with retouching in what looks like a tear through the woman's proper right arm, along the edges, and in much of the inscription. The varnish layers are so yellow that they are distorting the original colors. The ultraviolet light fluorescence is too dense to read all the retouchings clearly. The surface is very shiny and irregular in gloss.

The off-white ground is a commercially applied layer. The charcoal underdrawing, with its black particles scattered over the surface, is especially pronounced in the architecture and perspective lines. In infrared reflectography, the underdrawing lacks clarity, although some extraneous lines can be seen in the left column and other portions of the architecture. The image is primarily thin to moderate monochromatic gray/black work on white, except in the figure and the sky. Due to the thinness of much of the upper paint, many light passages probably make use of the ground for their color. Some of the final blacks may be reinforcing ink or paint lines over the charcoal.

1. Belloc 1894, p. 29.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–33; and Champsaur 1887–88, p. 315.
3. Champsaur, p. 308.
4. Belloc, p. 34.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.