



**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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Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications
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Designed by Susan Marsh
Composed in Meta by Matt Mayerchak
Copyedited by Sharon Herson
Bibliography edited by Sophia Wagner-Serrano
Index by Kathleen M. Friello
Proofread by June Cuffner
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Émile-Louis Vernier

French, 1829–1887

343 | Landscape c. 1860–80

Oil on panel, 13.8 x 21 cm

Lower right: E. Vernier

1955.890

Émile-Louis Vernier earned recognition in his own day as a painter, but he initially began his artistic career as a lithographer and was long appreciated only for his body of work in that medium. Having rejected the military life proposed by his family, Vernier moved to Paris and entered the studio of the printmaker Alexandre-Désiré Collette (1814–1876) at the age of twenty-one. After two years, Vernier struck out on his own to earn his living by making lithographs after paintings by his contemporaries, such as Corot, Rousseau, Henner, Daubigny, and Courbet. His fine renderings of a wide variety of styles made him a great success, and he regularly contributed his lithographs to the Salon. Vernier expressed a desire to establish himself as a painter, but it was not until the 1860s that he had the financial means to pursue the craft seriously. This included honing his technique through sketching trips in the countryside outside of Paris with his friends.¹ Vernier first exhibited his paintings at the Salon of 1864. These paintings, *View near Besançon* and *View of the Valley of the Source of the Ain (Jura)* (both loca-

tion unknown), show the landscape of the region where Vernier grew up. Vernier continued to make lithographs after the works of others throughout his career, but he also won praise and international publicity for his landscape and marine paintings, which often depicted the coast of Normandy. It was Vernier's capability as a painter that earned him knighthood in the Legion of Honor in 1881.

While under the tutelage of Collette, Vernier traveled with his master to Fontainebleau for two months. Vernier's introduction to the region and the members of the Barbizon School encouraged his interest in landscape paintings. His *Landscape* in the Clark collection demonstrates the influence of Rousseau, Corot, and Daubigny, with all of whom Vernier was both artistically and personally acquainted.² In *Landscape*, a dirt road divides a lush green landscape. Two figures, an adult and a child, walk along the path toward the horizon. Vernier roughly defined the bodies of his tiny figures using blocks of color, and his overall handling is broader and more freely executed than that found in many of his colleagues' works, in keeping with the small, informal nature of this panel. The path shines silver as puddles from a recent rain reflect the gray sky above. The road gently curves to the right, disappearing behind a bank of trees and bushes. This screen of foliage blocks the view of the intended destination of the figures, augmenting the sense of their isolation.

Sterling Clark bought this painting in 1936 with the descriptive title *Paysage, Route à l'orée d'un bois* (*Landscape, Road at the Edge of a Forest*). The image

fits seamlessly with the Barbizon paintings collected by Clark during his lifetime. Having absorbed the atmosphere of the landscape around Fontainebleau through his lithographs after his colleagues' work, Vernier here gives it his own somewhat more picturesque interpretation. KA

PROVENANCE [F. & J. Tempelaere, Paris, sold to Clark, 27 Mar. 1936, as *Paysage, Route à l'orée d'un bois*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1936–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1958a, ill.; Williamstown 1959b, ill.; Williamstown 1979b, no cat.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a mahogany panel 0.6 cm thick, with chamfers 1.3 cm wide on the back edges. The wood grain runs horizontally, and the panel has a slight convex warp. There is a small loss in the wood on the right edge, and some of the frame abrasion along the right and left edges is quite old, perhaps caused when the paint was still flexible. Daubs of orange paint, which may still be drying, appear to be oozing up through the surface. Short horizontal paint cracks follow the panel's grain, and where it still exists the old varnish displays a separate crack network. The coatings are uneven and moderately discolored, with residues in the green foliage, especially along the edges. All varnish layers appear to be natural resin, and the surface is shinier where the older deposits remain, especially in the lower right area. The signature is thin and abraded. The partial cleaning by Chapuis and Counce of Paris dates to 1936. The present varnish is thin enough to allow the brushwork of the paint layer to be readable in reflected light.

The off-white ground, which may have been applied by the artist, is so thin that it allows the panel grain to be visible. Several sections appear to have been pumiced or sanded, as diagonal scratches can be seen in the lower right and beneath the figures. No underdrawing was detected, although there may be a warm brown sketch laid in before the final colors. The sky was painted first, leaving reserves for the trees. The roadway appears to have been applied after the greenery, with reserves left for the two figures. The paint handling is open, loose, and lively, using small brushes throughout.

1. Guillemin 1905, pp. 4–6.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 5; *Academy* 1872, p. 165; Thomson 1915, p. 150.

Jules Jacques Veyrassat

French, 1828–1893

344 | Hay Wain c. 1850–93

Oil on panel, 31.4 x 27.3 cm

Lower left: J. Veyrassat.

1955.891

Although Jules Jacques Veyrassat is not well known today outside France, he was an accomplished artist in his time. He was associated with the Barbizon School, and his subjects consisted mainly of rural scenes, many depicting farm animals and workers in the fields or returning home. Several of his works take water scenes as their subject, with boats or ferries on canals. The hay wain or cart was a frequent theme, of which this is an example.

Veyrassat worked mainly in the media of painting and printmaking, but he also made drawings and highly detailed watercolors. In each of these media he made the study of horses his specialty. A critic noted in *The Art Journal* in 1877 that Veyrassat's "admirable studies of horses . . . show his usual marvelous qualities of . . . putting on canvas the sturdy, patient draught-horse of Normandy or Flanders."¹ The Clark painting is a small but carefully detailed scene, and is slightly unusual for the artist in its vertical composition. Other versions of the subject by Veyrassat are strongly horizontal, in the standard format for landscapes. *Haymaking Scene*, a watercolor in the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, bears numerous parallels to the present work, including two male workers resting on a bale of hay with a female wearing an apron standing over them, and several horses attached to a hay wain at right. Even the packs strapped to horses' backs are the same color as those in the Clark painting. *Haymakers Resting* (Williams and Son, London), an oil on canvas, is a horizontally extended version of *Hay Wain*, with a set of horses and carts on either side of a group of workers.

Little is known about the history of this picture. It may have remained with Veyrassat until his death, to be sold at his studio sale in December 1893, although the identification is not certain; Sterling Clark purchased it forty-five years later, in 1938, from Knoedler in Paris. Given the painting's small, delicate nature along with Clark's passion for horses, it is not surprising to find this among the many pictures in his