



**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)

Curtis R. Scott, Director of Publications  
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Bibliography edited by Sophia Wagner-Serrano  
Index by Kathleen M. Friello  
Proofread by June Cuffner  
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Details:

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PAGES 890–91: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Women of Amphis* (cat. 3)

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a walnut panel 0.2 cm thick, with wavy edges and rough saw marks on the upper surface. These attributes suggest that the support is not a commercially prepared or thinned panel, but a scrap the artist picked up from another source. The wood grain runs horizontally, and the panel appears to have been stained, together with the cradle. The softwood cradle, probably installed sometime after the work's purchase in 1914, may be the cause of the rolling distortions seen in the thin panel. Horizontal cracks in the paint and ground follow the wood grain. There is some active flaking at the horizon on the right edge. An old scuff to the right of the man poling the boat was made when the paint was wet. There are bits of reddish crystalline resin scattered in the sky, although the varnish layers are discolored toward the grayish yellow. There is no evidence of a previous cleaning, so the surface probably retains its first coating. Grime trapped below the varnish suggests that the picture was left unvarnished for a period of time prior to receiving this layer. In ultraviolet light, there appears to be a synthetic resin or wax layer on top of the older natural resin varnish. Overpaint runs across the top in a band increasing in width from 2.5 to 5.1 cm from left to right. There are poorly matched or aged retouches in the sky and the water, and the lower edge is also repainted, especially in the left corner. The surface reflectance is uneven, and matte areas in the clouds and foreground may be watercolor retouches.

The ground is a rough, uneven layer of what appears to be white paint, probably applied by the artist. The wood color shows in some foreground details, where lower sections of the image have no ground layer at all. There was no underdrawing detected. The paint is fairly vehicular, and the strokes are principally executed wet-into-wet, with impastos scattered throughout. The foreground is more choppy and thin, and perhaps even unfinished, which may have inspired the rather extensive restoration. There are bits and pieces of different colors below the paint in the lower third of the image, suggesting that this may be a reused panel. The signature was done in black ink.

1. B-H 1070–1095.

2. The plaster is in the collection of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, 1955.1023; the bronze is now in a private collection. See Williams-town–New York 2006–7, pp. 50–51, 65–66, 342, 354.

### 356 | The Grand Canal, Venice (Gondola before San Giorgio) c. 1865

Oil on panel, 37.9 x 56.5 cm; original dimensions,

36.2 x 54.6 cm

Lower right: Ziem

1955.903

Although he was an experienced traveler who journeyed throughout Europe as well as to Constantinople and Egypt, Ziem was known in his time as the painter of Venice. Highly regarded by critics and collectors, Ziem continued in the tradition of other Venetian view painters of earlier centuries, such as Francesco Guardi and Canaletto. Théophile Gautier described Ziem's predilection: "Each artist has an ideal homeland, often far from his true country. . . . Ziem's homeland is Venice. . . . He has portrayed his cherished city at all hours of the day, from the first glimmers of dawn to the last blush of evening, from the front, in profile, at three-quarters, from every angle."<sup>1</sup> From the start, Ziem made the waters of Venice his home, renting a barge, or *topo*, on which he lived and worked.

Ziem painted numerous views of the Palladian Church of San Giorgio Maggiore, which sits opposite the center of Venice, on its own island. Many of these works are similar in nature to the Clark picture. He regularly used the same ingredients of prominent and well-known architecture, large sailboats, and gondolas in his Venetian views. Rather than repeatedly depicting the same scene, Ziem took those essential elements and varied the composition by painting the boats in a different configuration or by viewing the same site from a different perspective. In fact, many of the paintings from this series depicting San Giorgio Maggiore view the church from the east looking west, which situates the dome and the campanile at the left side of the canvas, rather than from the west looking east, so that the church appears toward the right side as in the *The Grand Canal, Venice*. Two other works have compositions very similar to the Clark picture—both depict San Giorgio with a gondolier directing his boat to the right, in the direction of the church in the distance.<sup>2</sup> Some of these scenes are clearly just rough sketches, which Ziem could later work up in his studio. He also painted San Giorgio at night, which allowed him yet another variation in his depictions of this famous landmark.

It is difficult to date Ziem's work. He signed only a





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small number of his pictures, making it hard to place individual paintings, especially since he depicted similar places, subjects, and views throughout the long trajectory of his career. Out of about 1,600 paintings by the artist, fewer than fifty (or about three percent) were dated by Ziem. One work in this series of views of San Giorgio is signed and dated 1859; two others bear 1883 as their dates; and another was inscribed to a friend in 1888.<sup>3</sup> Neither *The Grand Canal, Venice* nor the other two similar works mentioned above are dated. Gérard Fabre dates a similar work, *Venice, Saint Mark's Basin* (private collection),<sup>4</sup> to about 1865,<sup>5</sup> and perhaps the Clark painting was made in approximately the same period.

Ziem's skills as a colorist can be seen in *The Grand Canal, Venice*, which has areas of brilliant salmon in the upper sky and purple, yellow, and peach along the horizon. The grayish-blue of San Giorgio's dome and the dark shadows that envelope the sailboats and water on the right half of the picture further indicate an evening scene. Vincent van Gogh once said of Ziem, whom he met in 1886, "I would like to make blues like Ziem does," a considerable compliment given the younger artist's own talent for handling color.<sup>6</sup>

The painting, executed in a sketch-like manner, is without any highly detailed elements. Even San Giorgio, while carefully outlined, is loosely and quickly painted in broad strokes. This work is more finished, however, than the smaller, related view, *San Giorgio*,

*Night*,<sup>7</sup> which is painted in thick, broken touches, perhaps to enhance the indistinct quality of the nighttime scene. KAP

**PROVENANCE** [Paul Détrimont, Paris, sold to Boussod, Valadon, 18 Nov. 1899]; [Boussod, Valadon, Paris, sold to Lincoln, 28 Mar. 1900, as *Grand Canal effet du soir*];<sup>8</sup> Mrs. R. C. Lincoln, Boston (from 1900); [Scott & Fowles, New York, sale, American Art Association, New York, 19 Nov. 1926, no. 22, possibly sold to Allard]; [Galerie J. Allard, Paris, sold to Knoedler, 12 July 1929];<sup>9</sup> [Knoedler, Paris, 1929–30, sold to Clark, 1 May 1930]; Robert Sterling Clark (1930–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1959b, ill.; Williamstown 1982c, p. 29, no. 39, ill. on cover.

**REFERENCES** Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 157, ill.; Miquel 1978, vol. 2, p. 96, no. 455, ill., as *Le Grand Canal, Venise*;<sup>10</sup> Burdin-Hellebranth 1998, vol. 1, p. 205, no. 507, ill., as *La gondole devant San Giorgio*.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is presumed to be a panel with the grain running horizontally, presently having a thickness of at least 0.3 cm. The painting has been elaborately mounted to a larger mahogany panel with added front edges to match the level of the painted surface. The reverse of this 0.8-cm-thick composite panel is also heavily cradled in mahogany. The top and bottom cradle members are gouged by framing nails. Since the panel was sold to Mr. Clark in 1930 with the unmounted, smaller dimensions, the mounting and cradling took place sometime after that date. Primarily

convex, the warp is complex in nature with indentations at the left and right edges that predate the cradling. There are horizontal splits in the secondary mahogany panel, which are only visible on the back. Rectangular age cracks appear in the paint and ground, with the vertical cracks more prominent. There are plates of lifted paint and ground in the left center sky. During a 1981 treatment, which removed several discolored brush coats of varnish, a former cleaning was noted, as well as repainted edges. There is some solvent abrasion in the dark browns, especially where they overlap the sky, and on the tops of what look like clear bead inclusions in the paint.

The ground layers are white, possibly traditional glue-based gesso, which can be detected below the paint here and there in the foreground. No underdrawing was detected. A pink and purple layer seems to be located along the horizon below the visible paint layer. There is also darker paint below the lower water areas and anomalous thick strokes in the lower left corner, which suggest either changes made by the artist or part of a discarded earlier image. The paint was applied wet-into-wet in quick, broad strokes. The pale colors are a thick, paste consistency. There may be an extender with large round translucent particles in some pigments, which made the paint more vulnerable to cleaning abrasion. Large details were painted after the sky was first laid in with a blue-gray color, with thinner details added after the final application of the yellow sky color. Several details were excised from the surface in the sky to the left of the two triangular sails.

1. Drouot 1868b, pp. 4–5: “Chaque artiste a une patrie idéale souvent éloignée de son vrai pays. . . . La patrie de Ziem est Venise. . . . Il a fait le portrait de sa ville chérie à toutes les heures du jour, des premières blancheurs de l’aube aux dernières rougeurs du soir, de face, de profil, de trois quarts, sous tous les aspects.”
2. B-H 501 and 502.
3. See B-H 541–42, 544, and 522.
4. B-H 223.
5. Fabre 2004, p. 59.
6. Quoted in Martigues 1994–95, p. 59: “Je voudrais pouvoir faire des bleus comme Ziem.”
7. B-H 501.
8. See Goupil Stock Books, book 14, p. 221, no. 26234.
9. A note in the curatorial file says that this picture was “purchased by Knoedler from Jules Allard (Paris dealer),” but this is likely to be a mistake, as Jules Allard et Fils was a notable interior design firm in Paris at the turn of the century. Given that Jules Allard died in 1907 and that Clark had purchased several pictures from Galerie Joseph Allard, it is likely that the Ziem was purchased from Joseph Allard as well.
10. Miquel erroneously lists the painting twice; it also appears as vol. 2, p. 92, no. 415, with partial provenance information.

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### 357 | Riva degli Schiavoni, Sunset 1880s

Oil on panel, 59.1 x 73 cm

Lower left: Ziem

Bequest of Madeleine Dahlgren Townsend

1982.12

Ziem painted literally dozens of views like *Riva degli Schiavoni, Sunset*, with many stylistic variations. In this version, a number of people appear to be awaiting the arrival of a gondola. They are standing on the Riva degli Schiavoni, the traditional point of entry to Venice for royalty and other important figures. On the quay to greet the boat is a man standing with his legs apart and a sword hanging from his belt, indicating that he is probably a nobleman. This figure acts as a counterpoint to the gondolier who steers the boat and is dressed in bright red. At the lower right, a group of figures, seated on the ground, proffers goods to the new arrivals while a dog looks on. Just beyond the figures is the Doge’s Palace, in a close if slightly obscured view. The bridge leading to the palace—the Ponte della Paglia—has been painted quickly, as a generalized pyramid-like shape rather than in great detail as in other versions. The Church of Santa Maria della Salute in the distance at left is almost completely obscured. A large ship is partially visible at the left edge of the canvas, its flag waving in the breeze. The painting’s colors reflect the fact that it is sunset and represent the full range of red, orange, yellow, and green.

*Gondola Docking, Riva degli Schiavoni* (location unknown), a painting very closely related to *Riva degli Schiavoni, Sunset*, appears to be a larger, more finished version of the Clark picture.<sup>1</sup> The perspective down the quay is essentially the same, as is the arrangement of figures, although the larger version lacks the small dog on the quay and the ship at the left edge of the image. Since *Gondola Docking* is considerably wider and its execution more resolved, this version was likely painted after the Clark panel. Moreover, the Clark painting appears to have a nearly complete underdrawing (see Technical Report). This would be appropriate for a work that served as a preliminary approach to a subject, in which the artist first drew his composition on the panel, then worked it up in relatively freely handled paint, and subsequently completed the process in a second, more fully finished work. This may be just the relationship between *Riva degli Schiavoni, Sunset* and *Gondola Docking*.