



**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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Details:

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colors. Although the paint is applied wet-into-wet, the brushstrokes are stiff and somewhat dry in consistency. The background paint is considerably thinner in consistency than the paint of the figure. There is no evidence of the oil patination layer seen on the other Madrazo paintings.

1. The dates and locations of both paintings are unknown. *The Beautiful English Woman* is illustrated in Temple 1908, p. 58.
2. Avery 1979, pp. 172, 174. Three years later Avery commissioned his own portrait from Madrazo.
3. See Goupil Stock Books, book 7, p. 238, no. 9942; book 8, pp. 92, 142, nos. 10244, 10253, 10994; book 9, p. 61, no. 10994; book 10, p. 56, no. 13592.

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Oil on panel, 65.4 x 48.5 cm
Lower right: R. Madrazo
1955.919

A smiling young lady sits on a marble bench in a garden, shielding her eyes from the sun's glare with her left hand in anticipation of an approaching visitor. On the ground next to her lies a wicker basket filled with picnic items and covered with a white cloth. She wears a long white satin dress covered by a pink dressing gown and a tight black ribbon around her throat. Her head is partially covered with a red ruffled hat. The background is filled with bushes and a winding sandy path that is partially hidden by the dense vegetation.

Although the subject of picnics had important precedents in the Spanish School, most notably in Goya's cartoons for tapestries such as *The Picnic (La Merienda)* (1776; Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid) or *The Meadow of San Isidro (La Pradera de San Isidro)* (1788; Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid), it was not a common theme for Spanish painters during the nineteenth century. In France, however, parks were becoming an increasingly important part of modern urban life. As a result, scenes of parks with open-air concerts, promenading couples, frolicking children, and people enjoying refreshments in outdoor cafes were often painted by French artists. Among artists who were interested in this subject, including Monet, Pissarro, and Renoir, it was Édouard Manet who immortalized the picnic scene in one of the greatest

masterpieces of the nineteenth century, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863; Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

Likewise, painters in the Spanish colony in Paris, of which Madrazo was one of the leading figures, felt drawn to this popular subject. Artists such as Francisco Miralles (1848–1901), Emilio Sánchez Perrier (1855–1907), and even Madrazo's brother-in-law, Mariano Fortuny (1838–1874), painted scenes related to picnics. In the case of Madrazo, a painter who specialized in portrait painting and interior genre scenes, outdoor themes were rare. As in his interior scenes, these outdoor paintings depicted aspects of life among the most privileged social classes, to which Madrazo had belonged since birth. His favorite outdoor subjects included the masked ball, in which people dressed in luxurious costumes, as in his famous painting *Leaving the Masked Ball* (1876; private collection),¹ or night scenes related to costume balls such as another *Leaving a Masked Ball* (c. 1885; Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Madrid)

As in most of Madrazo's interior genre paintings, the main character of the scene is a beautiful and fashionably dressed young lady. Madrazo was a traditional easel painter and it is doubtful that he created this scene *en plein air*. The model probably posed for the artist in his studio; the abundant vegetation that appears in the background was almost certainly invented as a romantic exercise by the artist. Madrazo was essentially a figurative painter, and landscape is rarely found in his work. In fact, this painting is one of the few examples, another being the canvas entitled *Woman Seated in a Garden* (c. 1875–1900; Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico), where vegetation plays a prominent role and comprises a significant portion of the scene. Despite the outdoor setting, the focus of the composition is on the depiction of the female figure and her attire. Madrazo perfectly balanced the detail and refinement of the lady's arms and visage with the freer brushstroke of her dress and of the still life in the lower left-hand corner. In the context of his oeuvre, this work testifies to the different ways in which Madrazo explored his favorite subject, the depiction of female beauty in a variety of modern surroundings. MR

PROVENANCE [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 2 Jan. 1934, as *The Rendezvous*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1934–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None



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TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a panel assembly made up of three vertical poplar boards, each 1 cm thick, the left-most being 26 cm wide, with two narrower boards making up the remaining width. The right board is wider at the top edge, creating an out-of-square dimension. The reverse is cradled with five fixed bars and five sliding slats, which may be original, as the fixed bars are irregularly spaced so they support the joins. Three old panel splits along the top and three at the lower edge were reglued at that time, but could not be fully rejoined. The center split of 8.9 cm at the bottom edge has also cracked the cradle bar beneath. Fine aperture compression cracks in the paint and the recent varnish run vertically and are often situated above the edges of the fixed cradle members. The painting was cleaned in 1997, and some old varnish remains trapped around the impastos and the foliage. The lower 1.3 cm is covered by an old layer of repaint, while new retouches mask frame abrasion.

The ground is a gray wash layer whose wide vertical application strokes are visible in infrared reflectography. The thinness of this layer allows the pale, warm wood color to contribute to the picture's general tone. There appear to be fine underdrawing lines, visible around the arms and the drapery at the figure's elbows, and there may be a thin brown paint sketch below the figure. Artist changes in the paint layer are visible in the entire left edge of the costume, which is now covered with a thicker foliage than the nearby greenery. There is also some reworking in the outlines of the proper left arm and at the top of the hat.

1. See Temple 1908, p. 14.