



**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,
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James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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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 Amphisa* (cat. 3)



255

James Pollard

English, 1792–1867

255 | Tom Thumb with Peter Brown and His Wife in a Gig 1828

Oil on canvas, 38.4 x 51.1 cm

Lower center: J. Pollard Holloway 1828

1955.923

James Pollard's coaching scenes are his greatest contribution to the popular genre of sporting art. Capturing the excitement and importance of this mode of transportation, Pollard's paintings and aquatints form a visual source for understanding the social aspects of coach and carriage driving in the first part of the nineteenth century. The 1820s and 1830s saw both the golden age of coaching and Pollard's most productive period.

As the son of the London-based engraver Robert Pollard, James's earliest work was published through his father's firm by 1812. Moreover, his father's correspondence with the engraver Thomas Bewick (1779–1825) provides valuable insight into the development of his career. After introducing his son to his friend and

colleague in a letter of 1816, the elder Pollard wrote that James "possesses both spirit & abilities in the Department of the Arts" and that horses form his chosen subject.¹ Three years later, Robert related his worry that James's preference for painting would provide a less stable living than working as an engraver.² By 1821, Robert was able to report that James had made his first important sale to the Austrian ambassador, who had seen his work for an inn sign.³ Later that year he wrote to Bewick announcing that James's first painting had been accepted at a Royal Academy annual exhibition.⁴

Although James Pollard periodically exhibited at the Royal Academy, for the most part he relied upon private patronage and the popularity of his aquatints, four of which are in the collection of the Clark. The Clark's *Tom Thumb with Peter Brown and His Wife in a Gig* dates from this early productive period and is typical of his smaller works, which detail the pleasures of private coaching. Here a miniature pony, with a suitably diminutive name, pulls a couple in a gig. Described by William Bridges Adams as "the lightest one-horse vehicle used in England,"⁵ the gig would be the most appropriate vehicle for a small-sized horse.

The painting shows Pollard's distinctive handling of oils to create a perfectly smooth surface, as well as his characteristic attention to cast shadows. More-

over, the subject allows the artist to display his humor. The size of the wheels of the gig and the running dog contribute to the visual play of the miniature pony pulling a carriage carrying the elaborately dressed Mr. and Mrs. Brown. EP

PROVENANCE [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 13 Apr. 1927, as *Tom Thumb with Peter Brown and His Wife in a Gig*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1927–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1961.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a fairly coarse fabric (thread count not accessible, possibly 13 threads/cm), with its tacking margins removed. The painting was glue-lined, cleaned, and repaired in 1940 through Durand-Ruel of New York, probably to correct two tears in the left sky. The picture was also treated in 1950 through Knoedler. Visible with infra-red viewing are a diagonal tear about 13 cm above the horse's head and another repair 5 cm in front of Mr. Brown. The lining fabric is a finer weave linen (19 threads/cm), and the replaced stretcher is made from a reddish colored, medium-density tropical hardwood. The dark age cracks are slightly cupped throughout the surface. The coating has its own crack system and is yellowed in vertical streaks. The left, right, and bottom edges are extended by fill and overpaint, which is shearing off from the tension caused by the glue on the brown-paper edge-tape. The painting is very damaged by solvents and was heavily reglazed in more than one campaign. The sky has darkened reglazing floating on the yellow varnish, applied to cover an earlier restoration layer that is now too white. The sky is now between twenty-five and fifty percent overpainted, and some details have been obliterated, such as the end portion of the coach whip, and edges of the figures and landscape. Nonetheless, the background and sky are very thinly painted, giving an appearance similar to a watercolor technique, and in fact the pale blue sky reglazing may have been done in watercolor, as there is some beading-up of this restoration, visible under low magnification. Some areas of paint appear to be underbound, or overly diluted, or perhaps are damaged by solvents. Close examination of details on the horse suggests that the artist may have used an intermediary varnish that would have made his upper paint layers very vulnerable to cleaning. The lower 2.5 cm of roadway is retouched, and the horse and the dark outlines on the dog are much strengthened. In reflected light, there is a weave impression, especially in the vertical direction, caused by the heavier original fabric.

The ground is not particularly visible but seems to be a cream color. There is a dark graphite underdrawing, very visible in infrared reflectography and to the unaided eye. Drawn lines from the carriage extend through the figures, and Mr. Brown's coat lines are particularly visible. There are unused

graphite lines in the sky and the notation "14 spokes" penciled in behind the carriage wheels. The faces are very quickly laid in and deftly handled. The decorative painting on the cart's wheels is executed in oil and ink.

1. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 11 Aug. 1816, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/1955/3258/67.
2. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 11 Jan. 1819, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/1955/3258/82.
3. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 6 Feb. 1821, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/3258/88.
4. Robert Pollard to Thomas Bewick, 1 June 1821, in Bewick 1772–1878, MSL/1955/3258/89.
5. Adams 1837, p. 245.

Paul Falconer Poole

English, 1807–1879

256 | *Mother and Child* c. 1850–70

Oil on panel, 25.7 x 21.6 cm
1955.832

Poole's evolution from son of a poor Bristol grocer to Royal Academician, honored posthumously with a retrospective at the Winter Exhibition of 1884, demonstrates the respectability available to Victorian painters by the middle of the nineteenth century. The two aspects of his oeuvre likewise encapsulate the dual challenge of earning a professional reputation and making a living. On the one hand, Poole was popular with collectors for his rustic scenes of women, while on the other, he gained critical attention exhibiting grander historical and literary scenes.

The theme of a mother nursing her child is typical of Poole in his rustic genre mode. In the case of the Clark's *Mother and Child*, the close physical and emotional connection between the subjects is emphasized with the mother's left arm drawing attention to the point of intersection. The suckling child's gaze beyond the picture plane engages the viewer in this Victorian version of a Madonna and Child. In this composition, Poole brings sensitivity to the sentimentality that pervaded much of Victorian painting of childhood and maternity.

Here, the mother encircles her child, her lap and right arm providing a human cradle. Poole emphasizes