



**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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## Johan Barthold Jongkind

Dutch, 1819–1891

### 186 | **Frigates** c. 1850–55

Oil on canvas, 54.6 x 80.6 cm

Lower right: Jongkind

Acquired by the Clark in memory of Eugene W. Goodwillie

(Institute Trustee, 1959–74), 1974

1974.4

When the Clark purchased the painting *Frigates* by the Dutch artist Johan Barthold Jongkind in 1974, the artist and his work were little known; it was a courageous purchase. To celebrate the acquisition, Charles C. Cunningham, the curator at the time, organized the exhibition *Jongkind and the Pre-Impressionists: Painters of the École Saint-Siméon*, the first and to date only study of the painters who worked in the open air on the Normandy coast around Honfleur.<sup>1</sup> Jongkind's painting, from early in his career, documents an important stage both in his own development and in the course of nineteenth-century French landscape painting.

Jongkind first studied with Andreas Schelfhout (1787–1870) at the Teknakademie (art school) in The Hague, beginning in 1837. Schelfhout, despite his largely formulaic production of winter scenes based on seventeenth-century Dutch prototypes, proved a generous teacher. While many of his students painted landscapes very much like his, Schelfhout seems not to have demanded conformity. From Schelfhout, Jongkind learned the craft of painting, including perspective and the mixing of paints. Ambitious, Jongkind wrote to King William I in 1843, asking for help; he received two hundred florins. Further support came later from the prince of Orange, who not only paid for French lessons but also subsidized Jongkind's trip to Paris. It is not clear what sparked Jongkind's desire to leave the Netherlands. His meeting Eugène Isabey (1803–1886) in 1845, when the Frenchman visited Holland as part of the official unveiling of a statue of William the Silent, may have been the impetus. Having learned enough French in three months to get by, Jongkind arrived in Paris in early March 1846 and entered Isabey's studio. Jongkind's subsidy continued until December 1852.<sup>2</sup>

A sociable man, Jongkind became part of a circle of artists who gravitated around the shop of Pierre-Firmin Martin on the rue Mogador, in Montmartre.<sup>3</sup> He

met others at Isabey's studio. Presumably he did not travel alone when he first went to Normandy and Brittany in 1847, but he may have. Later trips to France's northern coast, in the summers of 1850 and 1851, were made in the company of Isabey. While Jongkind was visiting the Netherlands between June and December 1848, Schelfhout encouraged his pupil to paint in watercolor, a medium he used to record natural and man-made motifs throughout his career.

Because Jongkind is associated with such artists as Eugène Boudin (1824–1898), Adolphe-Félix Cals (1810–1880), and Théodore Rousseau (1812–1867), who are known to have painted out of doors, recording what they saw; because Jongkind made trips to specific sites; and because he gave place-names to some of the paintings he exhibited at the Salon, the temptation to link his pictures to a particular locale is strong. The Clark's picture has been a victim of this tendency: the dealer from whom the painting was purchased, E. J. van Wisselingh, in Amsterdam, christened it *Harfleur*, a misnomer perpetuated by Victorine Hefting and most subsequent authors.<sup>4</sup> It is more accurately titled *Frigates*.

Missing from Jongkind's view is the soaring spire of Saint-Martin, a landmark of Harfleur. It is visible in the background of his *View of the Port of Harfleur* that he exhibited, with that title, at the Salon of 1850–51 (Musée de Picardie, Amiens), where its reaching steeple vies in height with the mast of a ship in the foreground. It also appears in another view, dated 1852 (Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena). Even the less than topographically reliable J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) included the spire of Saint-Martin in his watercolor of Harfleur, which was circulated as an engraving.<sup>5</sup> These depictions of Harfleur show a narrow, shallow, unimproved channel, crowded on both banks with houses and small-scale factories.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Harfleur was in decline, and had been so since 1516, when Francis I established Le Havre, farther north on the Seine estuary, as a new port to replace Harfleur. The river Léazard, on whose banks Harfleur was built, had started silting up in the late fifteenth century. In 1836, the situation was so bad that only 411 ships were recorded in the port. Three years later that number had declined to 359.<sup>6</sup> With so little shipping, and the Léazard almost completely silted up, there was no reason for the city to modernize with stone quays. The port of Harfleur may not even have been as developed as the bank shown at the right in the Clark's painting, reinforced as it is with wooden pilings.



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Rather than being a view of a specific port, Jongkind's painting is an amalgam of motifs, some of which he used often, others of which he turned to less frequently. Striking in *Frigates* are the round, mushroom-topped structures. They appear again in a moonlit picture of a canal bordered by a similar stone quay.<sup>7</sup> The buildings on either side of the canal look more Dutch than Norman, however, suggesting that Jongkind did not associate the round structures with a particular locale. The Clark's *Frigates*, then, is a combination of motifs, cleverly assembled to give the appearance of verisimilitude. For even if Jongkind's paintings do not depict actual sites, they are based on drawings and watercolors he made on his trips, as well as while resident in Paris. Jongkind's ability to translate the openness and looseness of his watercolors to the oil medium accounts for the freshness of many of his oils. Here, the pastel palette of blues, pinks, mauves, and greens is used throughout the picture, from sails, clothing, hills, and buildings, bringing light to every part of the canvas.

Signed but not dated, *Frigates* must have been done in the early 1850s. The paint handling is still relatively tight, reminiscent of the work of his Dutch teacher, Schelfhout. Also evocative of his maritime homeland is

the attention paid to the shipping. The five frigates at the wharf recede sharply back into space. The sixth one beyond suggests there are yet more ships and points to a commensurately lively economy.

This kind of picture, a blend of compositional types borrowed from seventeenth-century Dutch painting and carefully observed motifs bathed in light, introduced a new type of marine painting to France at mid-century. Marines by Jongkind's French teacher, Isabey, were the norm up to that time. Derived from eighteenth-century scenes of shipwrecks and stormy weather that were emblematic of the sublime, Isabey's seascapes were well received. Jongkind's calmer scenes that emphasized shipping spoke not to meteorological extremes and danger, but to commerce and hopes for stability and prosperity, that is, to the future.

In 1900, Claude Monet, reminiscing about his early career, claimed that he owed to Jongkind "the final education" of his eye.<sup>8</sup> In the early 1850s, Jongkind's brushwork began to loosen, and by the mid-1860s, about the time he met Monet, his paintings, often nocturnes, had become moody and expressive. His willingness to let brushwork take precedence over description proved a fruitful path for younger painters to follow. FEW

**PROVENANCE** Albert de Saint-Albin, Paris (d. 1901); Martell (until 1928, sale, Drouot, Paris, 26 June 1928, no. 13, ill., as *Grand Voiliers*); [E. J. Van Wisselingh, Amsterdam, sold to the Clark, 28 May 1974]; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1974.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1975, no cat.; Northampton–Williamstown 1976–77, pp. 32–33, no. 1, ill. on cover, as *Frigates, Port of Harfleur*; Williamstown 1978, no cat.; Huntington–Austin 1993–94, pp. 147–48, ill., as *Frigates, Port of Harfleur*; The Hague–Cologne–Paris 2003–4, p. 228, no. 31, as *Fregatten bij de haven van Harfleur* (German ed., p. 228, no. 31, as *Segelschiffe im Hafen von Harfleur*; French ed., p. 228, no. 27, as *Frégates au port d'Harfleur*).

**REFERENCES** Hefting 1975, p. 81, no. 78, ill., as *Harfleur*; GBA Suppl. 1976, p. 47, fig. 191, as *Frégates*; Sutton 1986a, p. 318, fig. 475; Hefting 1992, p. 39, ill., as *Haven van Harfleur*; Stein et al. 2003, p. 83, no. 68, ill., as *Grands voiliers dans le port d'Harfleur*.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The original support is a moderate-weight linen which was wax-resin-lined to a heavy fiberglass fabric. This treatment was performed in 1974 by Sheldon Keck, to repair torn tacking margins and to reduce the general cupping. The warped stretcher was replaced with a four-member LeBrun expansion-bolt design. As the painting is not square, shims were attached to the stretcher to create the necessary parallelogram shape. The lining fabric is quilted on the reverse from the force of the cupping paint, which is still pulling forward. There are broad shallow draws running from the upper edge of the painting and concave dishing in the lower left, possibly from the weight of the lining combined with the flat surface profile of the stretcher. There is a slight bulge in the reflection area of the front frigate. In ultraviolet light, patches of fluorescing old varnish can be seen on the ship hulls, and there is almost no retouching. Two stamps on the back of the original fabric, for the dealer Tempelaere and the color merchant Ange Ottoz, were recorded before treatment.

The commercial ground layers are off-white, and have cracked and cupped in a closely spaced pattern over the entire surface. Although no underdrawing was detected in infrared viewing, there may be a brown ink-wash sketch below the paint, seen under magnification. There are small changes in the image, the most obvious being adjustments to the masts on the ship furthest in the distance. Despite the cupping and some age fractures that are borderline traction cracks, the paint film is in very good condition. The surface is a complex layering of what appears to be ink with thick, fluid, vehicular oil paint and glazes, mostly executed wet-into-wet. Details which add to or refine the forms, especially on the small figures, appear to be executed in black and brown inks. Although reserves were left for most of the small figure groups, some were added on top of the large background brushwork.

1. Northampton–Williamstown 1976–77.
2. Biographical information on Jongkind taken from Stein et al. 2003, pp. 23–26. See also John Sillevs and Sylvie Patin in The Hague–Cologne–Paris 2003–4, pp. 13–31, 111–24.
3. Distel 1990, pp. 40–41.
4. Hefting 1975, p. 81, no. 78.
5. British Museum, London, TB CCLIX 102, engraved by J. Cousen for *Turner's Annual Tour—the Seine*, 1834. See Wilton 1979, p. 412, no. 955.
6. Dumont and Leger 1981, pp. 53, 59.
7. Stein et al. 2003, p. 94, no. 104, *Clair de lune sur le port* (private collection).
8. Quoted in Thiébault-Sisson 1900; translation from Stuckey 1985, p. 217.

## Roger-Joseph Jourdain

French, 1845–1918

### 187 | *Woman and Dog at the Gate* c. 1875–80

Oil on panel, 21.3 x 27 cm

Lower left: à Anaïs Fèvrier / Roger Jourdain

1955.785

Although Roger Jourdain had studied under Alexandre Cabanel (1823–1889) and Isidore Pils (1813/15–1875), two leading protagonists of academic methods, the informal handling and contemporary subject of *Woman and Dog at the Gate* demonstrate his allegiance, by the late 1870s, to a wholly different aesthetic. Though the picture is small in scale, its signature and dedication mark it as a work that Jourdain considered complete in its own terms, in the same sense as Alfred Stevens's small and informal paintings of the period, such as *Woman in White* (cat. 316). The identity of the dedicatee Anaïs Fèvrier is unknown.

The woman's tightly corseted waist suggests a date in the late 1870s; there is a marked contrast, however, between her skirt and her somewhat masculine jacket.<sup>1</sup> The body language and setting of the figure raise further questions about her status and identity. Though her face is comparatively individualized (in contrast to such stereotypical physiognomies as the face of the woman in Auguste Toulmouche's *Woman and Roses*, cat. 327), the situation in which she is placed invites the viewer to see the picture as a genre painting, not as a portrait, and to speculate on potential narratives. Her gesture and gaze suggest