



**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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Details:

TITLE PAGE: Camille Pissarro, *The Louvre from the Pont Neuf* (cat. 253)

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PRECEDING PAGE 474: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Onions* (cat. 280)

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

PROVENANCE Dr. Charles Abadie, Paris (until 1913, his sale, Drouot, Paris, 17 Apr. 1913, no. 33); Madeleine Dahlgren Townsend, New York, bequeathed to the Clark, 1981; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1982.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES Miquel 1978, vol. 2, p. 166, no. 1113D, as *Coucher de soleil sur la Grand Canal*; Burdin-Hellebranth 1998, vol. 1, p. 153, no. 373, ill., as *Quai des Esclavons, coucher de soleil*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a pale yellowish wood panel, possibly poplar, 0.6 cm thick, with a heavy mahogany cradle system attached to the reverse. The cradle members and the panel reverse are stained a dark color. There are three splits on the right edge, a split on the left edge, a small notch of wood missing from the top edge, and a dent in the left center sky. The varnish has aged to a yellow-brown tone, with some streakiness evident in ultraviolet light, especially in the lower left area. There are small edge losses of paint and ground in the two upper corners. The paint layer appears to be in excellent condition, and it is possible the picture has never been cleaned. There are drying cracks associated with the thicker paint strokes, and some short age cracks follow the panel grain. The surface is dull due to a layer of grime, and there may be grime trapped below the varnish, indicating the picture went without varnish for some time. Brown drips run from right to left; this occurred sometime when the picture was standing on its left edge. Retouchings may exist in the water near the signature.

The off-white ground appears to be two thin layers of a glue-based gesso. A network of short, quickly drawn, dark blue-black lines, perhaps of graphite or wax pencil, seems to make up a rather complete underdrawing. Lines in the sails, rigging, and buildings are visible using infrared reflectography or low magnification. Even several heads in the crowd and the figure with the sword contain some line work. The final paint layers are applied in a loose, fluid manner. The surface ranges from the thinly applied blue sky and thin dark colors up to the very thick impastos in the sun. The reds look transparent and glaze-like in consistency. There are stiff black brush bristles embedded in the paint layers.

1. B-H 366.
2. B-H 412.
3. BJ 391.
4. B-H 349 and 356.
5. B-H 368. The account book records Ziem's transactions between 1849 and 1883, and is currently held by the Musée Ziem, Martigues. In Martigues 1994–95, p. 64, it is noted that the Orsay painting is listed in the account book as no. 756, dated Dec. 1881.

Artist unknown

Austrian, 19th century

358 | *Woman Sketching in a Landscape* c. 1830

Oil on canvas, 131 x 98 cm
1982.60

Woman Sketching in a Landscape features a fashionable young lady sitting on a rock overlooking an idyllic valley. The woman's red shawl and brilliant white dress stand out against the subdued browns and greens that compose the natural setting. The open neckline of her dress exposes her softly sloping shoulders. A gold chain around her neck leads to a cross that is tucked into her belt.¹ The blue, white, and red satin ribbon belt is secured with a gold buckle at the waist, while its long ends hang toward the ground. The young woman's body faces the right, but she turns her head to acknowledge the viewer with a direct gaze and confident smile. She gently props up her sketching paper and portfolio with her left hand while her right hand rests on her lap, still holding the pencil with which she had been drawing moments before. The angle of her sketchpad shows off her drawing of a château and trees next to a bridge. Underneath the portfolio, a Scottish tartan drapes across her lap. The large woolen shawl disappears behind her torso and reappears behind her as a pile of folds before it cascades off the edge of the rock, brushing the ground next to a thistle plant. The rock where the woman sits juts upward behind her, creating a craggy throne that dominates the left side of the painting. On the right side, one sees a placid lake, the keep of a stone building, and large mountains in the distance. The two scenes are not exactly the same, but one may presume that the valley view is the subject of the woman's sketch. Perhaps her perspective cannot be seen by the viewer because it is partially blocked by the trees in the middle ground, or comes from beyond the painting's frame.

Though the artist who painted *Woman Sketching in a Landscape* is unknown, this portrait displays the influence of Austrian painters of the 1820s and 1830s, such as Friedrich von Amerling (1803–1887) and Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793–1865). Portraits by these artists bear a clear relationship to *Woman Sketching in a Landscape*, especially Waldmüller's numerous depictions of women in white.² Artists in the early nineteenth century canonized white mus-



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lin dresses, but the grand portraits of Waldmüller and other Austrian artists have deeper roots as well. Many Western portraitists of the Romantic era looked back to English portraiture of the eighteenth-century, in which artists often placed their subjects in front of a swath of red curtain that was drawn back to show nature, or among the rocks and trees of nature herself, as exemplified by many portraits by Thomas Gainsborough, including *Penelope (Pitt)*, *Viscountess Ligonier* (1770; The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino). Apparently conscious of this precedent, the artist of *Woman Sketching in a Landscape* depicted the rock face on the left

side so that it serves as the lady's seat in nature as it also functions like a dramatic curtain, partially blocking but also revealing the landscape in the distance.

Like many of their European contemporaries, artists like Amerling and Waldmüller borrowed from conventional portraiture methods, but they also manipulated them to fit their own style. Waldmüller inspired others through his prolific production and by actively promoting his approach to painting, which included the careful study of nature and the enjoyment of simple pleasures, such as a picturesque view, in what came to be known as Biedermeier style.³ The sitter in *Woman Sketching in a Landscape* follows

Waldmüller's artistic principles by sketching a pleasant valley scene *en plein air*. Furthermore, the clarity and precision of the handling of *Woman Sketching*, and the straightforward manner in which the sitter is presented, as well as the landscape setting, also parallel Waldmüller's work.

The turn of the nineteenth century brought with it a craze among European women for large shawls.⁴ Waldmüller painted portraits of women with shawls in a variety of colors and patterns, including Scottish tartans. The young woman in his 1833 painting *Lady in a White Dress* (Wien Museum Karlsplatz, Vienna) holds a red Scottish tartan that is reminiscent of that in *Woman Sketching in a Landscape* although it is a different pattern. Starting in the eighteenth century, women wore tartans to show their affiliation with the Jacobites who wanted to restore the Stuart line to the monarchy.⁵ In 1822, King George IV made the first English royal trip to Scotland in over a century and famously donned a kilt for the occasion. The King's presence contributed to a renewed sense of Scottish nationalism. Prior to the King's visit, most tartans were not known by name, but this event led to the publication of books that categorized tartans by region and clan. The plaid shawl in *Woman Sketching in a Landscape* can be specifically identified as the Royal Stuart pattern. The use of the Royal Stuart plaid, paired with the thistle in the left foreground, may hint at Jacobite sympathies. It may also simply reflect contemporary trends, for artists and writers across Europe became enthralled with Scotland during this period for reasons that were not strictly political. Many plays, books, paintings, and poems about the land and historical figures of Scotland were created in the Romantic era, not only because artists perceived Scottish culture to be in decline, but also because they were captivated by the drama and magic associated with the Highlands.⁶

It is possible, too, that these Scottish attributes are meant to relate to the sitter's identity, though nothing more is known about her. She is unlikely to be a professional artist, since it was uncommon for women of the period to pursue the craft at that level. Instead, she is probably demonstrating her proficiency at sketching, a skill most well-bred young women were expected to develop. It is also possible that the author of this image was the sitter herself (or perhaps one of her female companions), as certain aspects of the figure—such as the disproportionately long torso and legs—are slightly awkwardly rendered, suggesting a certain lack of rigorous training. Nonetheless, the art-

ist of *Woman Sketching* was clearly highly skilled, and the carefully painted details and appealingly direct portrait subject create a very engaging, if still not fully explained, work. KA

PROVENANCE Duc de Montbrun, Paris; Gaston Levy, Paris; [Auslander and Wittgenstein, New York, sold to the Clark, Dec. 1982]; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1982.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1983c, no cat.

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The moderately heavy linen support has a stable, old glue lining, minus the original tacking margins. Both the original fabric and the lining linen have a similar weave count at 13–16 threads per cm. There are no stretcher creases and very few cracks in the paint, suggesting that the painting may have been lined early in its history. The painting was cleaned and revarnished in 1983, when some overpaint on the face was removed, revealing a less idealized portrait. In ultraviolet light, traces of the older natural resin varnish can be seen in the dark background and the sitter's hair, as can a few early retouches.

The white ground layer, which may be commercially applied, has a visible texture created by small round translucent particles, possibly quartz, embedded in the surface. There is no detectable underdrawing, but charcoal was found embedded in the white of the dress hem, suggesting that some drawing may have been employed. The paint is applied in a tight, carefully controlled manner, with little overlapping or blending of form edges. Some larger, more pronounced brushes were used to lay in the foreground. Individual areas were executed wet-into-wet, such as the vine winding up the stem in the lower left corner or the larger color bands of the plaid shawl. The finer lines of the plaid's pattern, however, were applied only after the rest was dry. Particles of a coarse-grained blue pigment, visible at low magnification, were used in the blue and green passages, even in the shading of the sitter's face. The flesh areas were done with a lighter, more translucent stippled brushwork.

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1. Sir William Beechey's *Portrait of Kitty Packe* (c. 1818–21; Oklahoma City Museum of Art) exhibits a similar cross on a long gold chain that is tucked into the sitter's belt.
 2. See, for example, Waldmüller's *Lady in a White Dress in front of a Viennese Landscape* (1829; Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna) and *Portrait of Aloisa, Waldmüller's Daughter* (1830; Nationalgalerie, Berlin).
 3. Lurie 1994, pp. 3–4.
 4. Byrde 1992, pp. 29, 39.
 5. Hesketh 1961, p. 45.
 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87, especially concerning Sir Walter Scott's *Waverly*, first published in 1814.