



**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,
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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
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Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute is published with the assistance of the Getty Foundation and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The Getty Foundation



Produced by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267
www.clarkart.edu

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Production by The Production Department,
Whately, Massachusetts
Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

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Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040
www.yalebooks.com/art

Printed and bound in Italy
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

Nineteenth-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / 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, Fronia E. Wissman.

volumes cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-935998-09-9 (clark hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-300-17965-1 (yale hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Painting, European—19th century—Catalogs. 2. Painting—Massachusetts—Williamstown—Catalogs. 3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—Catalogs. I. Lees, Sarah, editor of compilation. II. Rand, Richard. III. Webber, Sandra L. IV. Title. V. Title: 19th-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

ND457.S74 2012

759.9409'0340747441—dc23

2012030510

Details:

TITLE PAGE: John Constable, *Yarmouth Jetty* (cat. 73)

OPPOSITE COPYRIGHT PAGE: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Bathers of the Borromean Isles* (cat. 89)

PAGE VIII: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Woman Crocheting* (cat. 267)

PAGE X: Claude Monet, *Seascape, Storm* (cat. 222)

PAGE XII: Jacques-Louis David, *Comte Henri-Amédée-Mercure de Turenne-d'Aynac* (cat. 103)

PAGE XVI: William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Nymphs and Satyr* (cat. 33)

PRECEDING PAGE 2: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Snake Charmer* (cat. 154)

Paul Gauguin

French, 1848–1903

148 | Young Christian Girl 1894

Oil on canvas, 65.3 x 46.7 cm

Lower right: P. Gauguin 94

Acquired by the Clark in honor of Harding F. Bancroft (Institute Trustee, 1970–87; President, 1977–87), 1986 1986.22

Young Christian Girl has a straightforward visual immediacy—the simplified forms of the figure dominate the canvas, while the vibrant shades of yellow, green, lilac, and coral energize a composition that is depicted without traditional perspective. Even the visibly rough, uneven canvas gives the work a sense of homespun simplicity. As well as presenting this direct appeal, the image is also filled with multilayered, complex significance. Gauguin painted it during a six-month stay in Brittany, his fifth visit since 1886, when he first went to the northwest corner of the country in search of a simpler—and less expensive—way of life than that in Paris. While his initial goal in relocating had been primarily to save money, Gauguin subsequently focused on the long-standing reputation of the region as more primitive, less tainted by modern civilization, than the rest of the country. Its distance from the contentious art world of the capital also encouraged him in developing a new artistic persona and stylistic approach, and ultimately prompted him to seek out locations that were even more distant. In 1887, he spent about four-and-a-half months in Martinique, and in June 1891, having achieved some prominence as the largely self-proclaimed leader of the emerging Symbolist artists, as well as having obtained some funding through a successful auction of his works four months earlier, Gauguin arrived in Tahiti on an official, government-supported mission. He remained there for about two years, returning to Paris in August 1893. The following April he took up his habitual residence in the Breton town of Pont-Aven, and it was at this point that he painted the present work.

Although the narrow, cypress-like trees and the buildings in the landscape, despite their bright, non-naturalistic colors, indicate a location in Brittany, the young woman's yellow dress and dark blue-black cap are nothing like Gauguin's previous depictions of Breton women. Even in a painting like *Yellow Christ* (1889; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo), with its

equally emphatic use of the primary color, all three women wear the traditional dark Breton dresses and white headwear (although one has an uncharacteristically orange apron). In fact, the dress in *Young Christian Girl* is typical of the vibrant, loose-fitting clothing brought by missionaries to Tahiti, and Gauguin had presumably acquired it on his recent travels, or had simply invented it based on his experience abroad. Moreover, the woman's hair is not bound and confined under her cap but falls loosely over her shoulders in a manner similar to the way Gauguin had depicted many Tahitian women just a few months earlier. Yet her fair complexion and orange-gold hair rule out identification as Tahitian. The figure is clearly an imaginative hybrid: her colorful dress would have been as much an adopted import for a Breton woman as her Christian faith for a Tahitian. The devotional pose may derive from still other sources, since it recalls fifteenth-century Flemish portraits and religious paintings, examples of which Gauguin had likely seen during his visit to Brussels and Bruges in February 1894, just prior to returning to Pont-Aven.¹ It may also reference sculpted figures on the Buddhist temple of Borobudur in Java, Indonesia, at least one photograph of which Gauguin owned.² This would add yet another layer, in this case of non-Christian allusion, to the image.

Recent authors have also discussed the implications of the color yellow itself, for it played an important role in the artistic dialogue Gauguin had shared with Vincent van Gogh, most intensely during the two months from October to December 1888 when Gauguin had stayed in Arles in the south of France at Van Gogh's invitation. For Van Gogh, yellow represented a heightened emotional state; as Druick and Zegers have described it, yellow stood for “the subject of creativity and madness—of the dangers posed by the imagination unfettered in reality.”³ While these implications might be somewhat at odds with the calm, contemplative pose of the *Young Christian Girl*, the color persisted in Gauguin's work as it had in Van Gogh's, further supported by other associations such as those with Japanese prints and popular French posters and novels.⁴ Druick and Zegers propose yet another possible link, prompted by the work's religious overtones and by the unusual appearance of the background at the woman's sides—including several concentric, curved red lines at the right—which is difficult to interpret either as landscape forms or as directly connected to the figure. Taken together, these elements might suggest wings, which in turn might point to a picture of the angel Raphael by Rembrandt



that Van Gogh believed to be primarily painted in yellow, though he knew it only from a printed reproduction—a copy of which he had asked his brother Theo to send to Gauguin.⁵

Clearly, no single interpretive strategy can account for every aspect of *Young Christian Girl*. Even the identity of the sitter—proposals have included Annette Belfis, the mistress of Thomas de Monfried, an artist friend of Gauguin, or Judith Molard, daughter of the musician William Molard, a neighbor at the time—seems less significant than aspects of the image that are based on imagination rather than reality. Similarly, although the work has at times been titled *Breton Girl in Prayer*, despite having been called *Jeune chrétienne* (Young Christian Girl) by the artist himself in his 1895 sale, the figure is too hybrid for the regional designation to be accurate. Finally, it is also one of only a few paintings the artist produced in this period, and Druick and Zegers suggest that its innovative nature might indicate that Gauguin was seeking to develop his previous depictions of the region in new directions.⁶ But he was clearly looking forward as well as back, and in this sense *Young Christian Girl* can be seen as a transitional work before Gauguin's definitive departure from France the following year, when he returned to Tahiti. SL

PROVENANCE The artist (his sale, Paris, Hôtel des Ventes, 18 Feb. 1895, no. 46, as *Jeune chrétienne*);⁷ Amédée Schuffenecker or Claude-Émile Schuffenecker, Paris; Julius Meier-Graefe, Paris and Berlin (sold to Bernheim Jeune, 12 Oct. 1907); [Bernheim Jeune, Paris, 1907–9, sold to Kann, 26 Jan. 1909]; Alphonse Kann, Saint-Germain-en-Laye (from 1909); [Ambroise Vollard, Paris, sold to Reber, Oct. 1912]; Dr. Gottlieb Friedrich Reber, Barmen, Germany (1912–until at least 1913); Thea Sternheim, La Hulpe, Belgium (1915–19, her sale, Frederik Muller, Amsterdam, 11 Feb. 1919, no. 1, as *Jeune fille bretonne*);⁸ [Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, by 1929]; [Paul Rosenberg, Paris, 1930–until at least 1935];⁹ [possibly Rosenberg and Helft, London, in 1937]; Mrs. J. B. August Kessler, London (by 1948–until at least 1955); Mrs. (N. L.) Augusta McRoberts, Shipbourne, Kent, England (by 1960–until at least 1963); [Alex Reid & Lefevre, London, until 1986, sold to the Clark, 9 July 1986]; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1986.

EXHIBITIONS Barmen 1912, no. 30; Berlin 1913, no. 37, as *Mädchen aus der Bretagne*; Winterthur 1922, no. 45;¹⁰ New York 1929c, no. 37, ill., as *Breton Girl*, lent by Flechtheim Gallery; New York 1932b, no. 5, as *Bretonne en prière*; Paris 1935, no. cat.;¹¹ London 1937, no. 14, pl. VIII, as *La Bretonne*; London 1948, no. 16, ill., as *A Girl from Brittany in Prayer*; Edinburgh–London–Oslo 1955, no. 50, as *Breton Girl Praying* (Norwegian ed., no. 32, as *Bedende Bretagne-pike*), lent

by Kessler; Paris 1960, no. 128, as *Jeune fille bretonne en prière*, lent by McRoberts; Munich 1960, no. 62, fig. 36, lent by McRoberts; Vienna 1960, no. 35, fig. 9, lent by McRoberts; London 1963, no. 68, ill., lent by McRoberts; Williamstown 1986b, no. cat.; Washington–Chicago–Paris 1988–89, pp. 349–50, no. 190, ill. (French ed., pp. 344–45, no. 190, ill.); Williamstown 1991b, no. cat.; Pont-Aven 1994, p. 41, no. 22, ill. on cover; Liège 1994–95, pp. 108–9, no. 48, ill.; Montreal 1995, no. 129, pl. 81; Boston 1996, no. cat.; Graz 2000, pp. 210–11, no. 31, ill.; Saint Louis–Frankfurt 2001, pp. 141, 241, ill.; Cleveland–Amsterdam 2009–10, pp. 181, 183, 240, no. 106, ill.

REFERENCES Rotonchamp 1925, p. 155, no. 46, as *Jeune chrétienne*; Kunstler 1934, p. 26, ill.; Kunstler 1937, p. 49, ill., as *Bretonne en prière*; Rewald 1938, p. 56, ill., as *A Girl from Brittany in Prayer*; Cogniat 1947, pl. 87; Nicolson 1948, pp. 324–25, fig. 23; Paris 1949, pp. 98, 111; Dovski 1950, p. 351, no. 323; Boudaille 1963, p. 192, ill.; Wilenski 1963, p. 353, as *Filette de Bretagne en prière*; Wildenstein 1964, p. 212, no. 518, ill., as *Bretonne en prière*; Pickvance 1970, p. 38; Sugana 1972, p. 107, no. 342, ill.; Fezzi 1981, vol. 2, p. 52, no. 497, ill.; Dowski 1973, p. 272, no. 323; Philadelphia 1973, p. 68, under no. 25; Amishai-Maisels 1985, pp. 56–58, fig. 18; Le Pichon 1986b, p. 194, ill. (English ed., p. 194, fig. 368); Sabin 1986; Prather and Stuckey 1987, p. 264, pl. 87; Cachin 1988, pp. 206–7, fig. 225; Grand Palais 1988, p. 72, fig. 46; D'Halluin 1989, pp. 127–32, ill.; Gibson 1990, p. 22, fig. 84; Greenfeld 1993, p. 76, ill.; Millroth 1993, pp. 153–58, ill. between pp. 160–61; Delouche 1996, pp. 84, 86–87, 123, ill.; Kern et al. 1996, pp. 110–11, ill.; *Antiques* 1997, pp. 530–31, ill.; Chicago–Amsterdam 2001–2, pp. 344–45, fig. 17; Pophanken and Billeter 2001, pp. 261, 355, 357, 389–90; Satullo 2002, p. 39, ill.; Rome 2007–8, p. 111, fig. 5.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a very coarse, short-fibered fabric (9 x 13 threads/cm) with irregular threads visible throughout the surface. Due to uneven stretching by the artist, the fabric weave has cusping between tack locations. The painting has a paste strip lining of finer weave linen which extends 1 cm under the image area. The five-member pine stretcher appears to be a replacement. The paint and ground layers have a series of vertical cracks of various apertures stemming from a combination of the uneven weave, a possible size layer, a friable ground, and somewhat desiccated paint. Pinpoint losses have occurred at crack intersections throughout the image due to the brittleness of the whole structure. There is solvent abrasion in the thin blue, black, and purple areas. The picture may originally have been left unvarnished, but may once have been waxed. In 1996, a restoration layer of PVA varnish was removed, along with Acryloid B-72 and Soluvar applied in 1986, and replaced with a nearly invisible layer of B-72. The painting is very striking in ultraviolet light due to the artist's use of a zinc white admixture in numerous passages.

The ground is a thin, artist-applied off-white gesso, comprised of calcium carbonate and animal glue with a small

amount of gypsum. It covers most of the image area in horizontal strokes but does not extend onto the tacking margins. The application is very uneven, with thicker deposits in some areas and almost none in the corners and along the right and lower edges. Charcoal underdrawing lines are visible in infrared reflectography, and under magnification some of these lines appear strengthened with bluish painted outlines. Several changes were noted in the background, where some elements were roughly indicated in the underdrawing but altered in the painted form. The signature disappears in infrared light. Most of the paint was applied in a thick, dry application, and much of the detailing is applied dry-over-dry. In 1986, fifteen pigment samples were analyzed, and the findings indicated that most pigments were generally characteristic of Gauguin's palette. All the samples contained wax, suggesting that it may have been either a component of the paint or an early coating.

1. Rick Brettell in Washington–Chicago–Paris 1988–89, p. 350.
2. Chicago–Amsterdam 2001–2, p. 345.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
4. These aspects are explored by Heather Lemonedes, particularly in relation to Gauguin's 1889 "Volpini suite" of zincographs, which were printed on yellow paper. See Cleveland–Amsterdam 2009–10.
5. Chicago–Amsterdam 2001–2, p. 345.
6. *Ibid.*
7. An unpublished report (*procès-verbal*) of this sale lists the Clark painting as no. 45 and notes that Gauguin bought it back, as he did many of the works in this largely unsuccessful sale. The report was reproduced in Paris 1949, p. 98.
8. Information on the sale from Vollard to Reber and on Sternheim's purchase of this painting in 1915 is given in Pophanken and Billeter 2001, pp. 261, 355, 357.
9. In the Paul Rosenberg Archives, this painting, inventory no. 2837, appears in a list of works photographed, listed after an entry dated 30 June 1930, and before an entry of Nov. 1930, thus giving an approximate date of acquisition by the gallery. See The Paul Rosenberg Archives, a gift of Elaine and Alexandre Rosenberg. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
10. Information on the exhibitions in Barmen 1912 and Berlin 1913 is given in Pophanken and Billeter 2001, pp. 389–90. Gordon 1974, vol. 2, p. 649, gives the title *Mädchen aus der Bretagne* in Berlin 1913. Information on the exhibition in Winterthur 1922 is given in Wildenstein 1964, p. 212, no. 518.
11. The presence of this painting in this exhibition is confirmed by a photograph of the installation, labeled "tableaux du 19e, décors anciens," in the Paul Rosenberg Archives. See The Paul Rosenberg Archives, a gift of Elaine and Alexandre Rosenberg, III.A.1.38. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

Théodore Géricault

French, 1791–1824

149 | Trumpeter of the Hussars c. 1815–20

Oil on canvas, 96 x 71.8 cm; original dimensions, 72 x 58 cm
1955.959

Style of Théodore Géricault

French, 19th century

150 | Study after *Trumpeter of the Hussars*

c. 1815–27

Oil on canvas, 35.7 x 27 cm; original dimensions 32.5 x 24.3 cm
1955.745

Géricault first established his reputation by showing a monumental painting of a mounted military figure, the *Charging Chasseur*, at the 1812 Salon, followed two years later by the *Wounded Cuirassier Leaving the Field of Battle* (both in the Musée du Louvre, Paris). He continued to depict similar figures at both large and small scale for a number of years. His attention to details of the sitters' uniforms generally allows for precise identification of the type of soldier depicted, and he devoted equal care to the depiction of horses, in military as well as many other contexts throughout his career. *Trumpeter of the Hussars*, although much smaller than the two Salon works, clearly relates to them both formally and thematically. Despite the precision of his subjects' external forms, however, perhaps the most striking aspect of nearly all his military-themed works prior to about 1818, including *Trumpeter of the Hussars*, is their ambiguity. The connections between these evocative figures in their closely focused, abbreviated settings and the complex political situation at the end of the Napoleonic era in which they were made are open to interpretation; the paintings have, for example, been seen as embodiments of Imperial power and its defeat, or as a "real and very subtle allegory against war," among many other readings.¹ Even the figures' role as soldiers is unclear, since Géricault never showed his subjects actually engaged with an enemy, although evidence