



**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,
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Details:

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

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

stains and some fading, and the inscription is in iron gall ink and reads more easily in ultraviolet light. Old creases and breaks in the thin original support, especially at the edges and corners, were consolidated in 2011. A small piece of the pulp board is missing from the top edge, and there is circular damage in the upper left sky. There are scattered small dents and embedded debris from the mounting. Layers of blackish brown grime and brown varnish, dating from the time of the mounting, were removed during the 2011 treatment.

There appears to be no ground layer, only a possible size layer applied against the fibrous surface. The ungrounded pulp board shows in thinner passages, and has turned a warm orangey brown. No underdrawing was detected. The paint handling is paste consistency throughout, applied wet-into-wet. There may be some smooth palette-knife work in the central foreground. Thin passages in the sky, where the brown support showed, were glazed to match the pale tone of the surrounding paint. The monogram is in brown paint.

1. M 534. A print was made after this work by Rouargue frères and published by Baillieu in 1838 in *Album Maritime*. The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England, owns this print (PAD7319; T.33.337).
2. For example, in 1853, because of his wife's ill health, Isabey took up residence in Varengeville for the summer; see Klein 1996, p. 48.
3. M 400. The Clark work measures 38.4 x 31.2 cm, while *Study of Cliffs* measures 29 x 40 cm.
4. The inscription reads: "Falaises Normandes; peinture par/ E. Isabey/ Donné en heritage, comme part. a monsieur Camille/Lemarettes, heritier de Monsieur Paul Lemarettes, mort le 18 Fevrier 1890 a Quimper" (Cliffs of Normandy; painting by/ E. Isabey/ given as a share of inheritance to Monsieur Camille/ Lemarettes, the heir of Monsieur Paul Lemarettes, who died on 18 February 1890 in Quimper). The last digit of the date is difficult to read, but it seems to be a zero.

176 | Landing Stage on the Jetty c. 1860

Oil on panel, 28.6 x 46 cm

Lower right: E. Isabey

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hirschl

1990.62

Eugène Isabey is well known for his marine paintings of the Normandy coast, which he first began making in the 1820s. Throughout his life he returned to the seaside many times, sketching and painting *en plein air* the rocky cliffs of the coasts at Étretat and Varengeville

as well as activity of the ports at Le Havre, Dieppe, and Trouville. His more dramatic works celebrate the ruthlessness of the sea and the human struggle against it, as in *The Storm (Shipwreck)* (Musée Fabre, Montpellier). The Clark painting, while revealing something of the power of the sea, also celebrates the charm of northern France's small fishing towns.

Isabey studied painting with his father, the miniaturist Jean-Baptiste Isabey (1767–1855). The younger Isabey furthered his skills by copying paintings in the Louvre. His Salon debut in 1824 included seascapes and landscapes; his efforts were rewarded with a first-class medal.

In *Landing Stage on the Jetty*, the artist pictures the return of three small fishing boats to a wood and brick pier. In the foreground, the boat furthest right has already taken down its sails and mast; those on board disembark and proceed to climb the stairs to the jetty. Sailors on the second fishing boat prepare to dock by lowering sails; seamen on the third boat navigate toward the stairs. Two additional boats, sails full, move around the end of the pier, perhaps intending to head out to sea. The wooden-railed jetty, which extends from the right side of the work, neatly bisects the panel, separating the cloud-strewn sky and the choppy ocean. The pier itself is scattered with people who observe the activity around them.

Throughout *Landing Stage on the Jetty* Isabey exhibits confident, loose brushwork. He applied paint quickly, layer upon layer, wet pigment upon wet. The sea itself is composed of various colors: thin strokes of blue paint reveal a white ground layer below. Brown pigment applied over blue gives depth to the waves, and small daubs of white, dotted around the sea to suggest the foam of waves, provide texture. The fluid movement of Isabey's hand captures the intensity of the wind, the power of the crashing waves, the flurry of commercial and leisure activity at this port.

This painting has long been known as *The Pier at Dieppe*. When the London branch of the firm of Christie, Manson and Woods auctioned this work and other stock from the art dealers Hollender and Cremetti in 1906, this panel was listed as "Dieppe Pier."¹ In 1985, Christie's, London, again offered this painting, this time with the title *The Pier at Dieppe*.² The jetty and lighthouse are the only physical clues to the location of this work; no coastal landscape or view of the town is relayed by the artist to securely locate the scene.

In the nineteenth century, Dieppe's harbor was reached by sailing between two piers that stretched



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into the waters of the English Channel. In 1855, a wooden lighthouse on the western pier burned. A temporary warning system—a mast with three beacons—was constructed on the eastern pier. Later, a cylindrical stone tower thirty-five meters high was erected at the end of the western jetty.³ The tower in Isabey's work is similar in shape to that erected at Dieppe, but hardly as tall as it should be. While the squatness of the lighthouse might be accounted for by the artist's low viewpoint, the placement of the tower is also off in Isabey's panel: at Dieppe, the new tower was centered at the very end of the pier, not placed off to the right side well before the termination of the jetty. Other representations of the Dieppe lighthouse, such as the lithograph after E. Petit's *Departure for Herring Fishing (Port of Dieppe)* (Château-Musée, Dieppe), suggest that there was no open area under the pier for boats and water to pass through, nor were there stairs leading from the jetty to the sea.

Isabey's representation also shares characteristics with the lighthouse and pier at Honfleur, a village that he is known to have visited in 1859 with fellow artist Eugène Louis Boudin, and again in 1862. The white cylindrical lighthouse at Honfleur was not at the end of the pier, but off to the right, as in Isabey's work. In addition to the lighthouse, a wooden shed and a system of masts capable of flying warning flags were located near the Honfleur harbor lighthouse.⁴ Isabey represents a mast with flags and a small shed to the

right of his lighthouse in the Clark painting. Isabey's lighthouse and pier, however, are not one-to-one transcriptions of the Honfleur tower and jetty, thus preventing one from definitively linking this panel with Honfleur. A comparison with Léon-Auguste Asselineau's lithograph of the *Entrance to the Port of Honfleur* reveals details of the lighthouse not articulated by Isabey.

Although Isabey often painted *en plein air*, and the handling of paint on this panel suggests quick painting before the subject, later in his career he was known to use model boats in his studio.⁵ The absence of geographical clues, together with the generic nature of the round white lighthouse, make it possible that Isabey composed this scene from memory (or perhaps his imagination) while working in his studio. In his catalogue of paintings by the artist, Pierre Miquel entitled this work *Le débarcadère sur la jetée (The Landing Stage on the Jetty)*, a descriptive title that neatly avoids the problem of geography.⁶ Further, the date of circa 1860 postdates the construction of the Dieppe lighthouse and coincides roughly with Isabey's visits to Honfleur, allowing for the possibility that these sites inspired Isabey's production.

Regardless of the scene's intended or imagined location, Isabey's painting celebrates the activity centered around the nineteenth-century harbor pier. While fishermen disembark from their boats, men and women observe the commotion around them, carry on

conversations, and promenade on the pier. A group of men to the left of the stairs converse animatedly, one man in a brown vest gesturing with his left hand outstretched, emphasizing his point. Two women at the center of the canvas duck their bonnet-adorned heads and attempt to make progress despite the gusting wind. These figures are emblematic of the status of small fishing villages like Dieppe and Honfleur, which over the course of the nineteenth century became increasingly fashionable resorts for middle- and upper-class city dwellers.⁷ AG

PROVENANCE [Hollender & Cremetti, London, their sale, Christie's, London, 8 Dec. 1906, no. 72, as *Dieppe Pier*, sold to Younger]; Younger (from 1906); Delves Molesworth, London, sold to Hazlitt, 1948;⁸ [Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London, from 1948, sold to Cahn]; Sigfried Cahn; probably Mrs. Sigfried Cahn, by descent; sale, Christie's, London, 11 Oct. 1985, no. 85, as *The Pier at Dieppe*, sold to Hazlitt; [Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London, from 1985, sold to Hirschl]; Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hirschl (1985–90, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1990.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1992c, no cat.

REFERENCES Miquel 1980, vol. 2, p. 109, no. 284bis, ill., as *Le débarcadère sur la jetée*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a flat mahogany panel 1 cm thick with the grain running horizontally. The back edges have chamfers 1.3 to 1.6 cm wide, and there are some vertical sanding marks on the reverse. The reverse appears to be partially coated with varnish. The paint is generally in good condition. The top and lower edges were not originally painted, although the lower edge is now inpainted. The top edge still shows a 1.3-cm-wide band of plain ground layer. An old vertical scratch, which was present before the painting was executed, is visible in the center foreground. There are minor drying cracks in some impastos, and some of these higher paint strokes have flattened and grimy tops. Some thin, dilute passages have split into islands of paint. The picture was recently cleaned, perhaps around 1990. There are older varnish residues trapped around the impastos and in the vertical cracks of the lower left quadrant, detectable in ultraviolet light. Retouching along the top and bottom edges is also visible. The coating is shiny, looks spray-applied in reflected light, and is thin enough to allow the paint-layer brushwork to be quite visible.

The ground is a commercially prepared cool white color, comprised of several layers and finished with a smooth surface. Although no underdrawing was detected in infrared light, wide, loose charcoal line remnants are visible in thin passages of the pier. There was a small paint adjustment made to the left of the top of the lighthouse, visible to the unaided eye. A thin brown sketch is discernible as part of the pier's paint layers.

The paint handling was begun in very thin washes, followed by impastoed color accents and nervous detailing.

1. Christie's 1906, p. 13, no. 72. The sale was occasioned by Count Hollender's death, which ended the partnership of the dealers.
2. Christie's 1985, p. 38, no. 85.
3. For more on the history of Normandy's lighthouses, see Honfleur–Granville 2002.
4. In 1857, Honfleur erected an additional lighthouse on the rocks near its hospital southwest of the village. Many artists have represented this lighthouse, including Georges Seurat, whose *The Lighthouse at Honfleur* of 1886 is now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington.
5. See Pierre Miquel's entry on Eugène Isabey in *Grove Art Online*.
6. Miquel 1980, p. 109.
7. For more on the evolution of Norman fishing villages into leisure resorts, see David Hopkin, "Fishermen, Tourists and Artists in the Nineteenth Century: The View from the Beach," in *London–Washington–Hartford 2007–8*, pp. 31–37.
8. Molesworth was Keeper of Architecture and Sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Jozef Israëls

Dutch, 1824–1911

177 | **Woman on the Shore** After 1857

Oil on panel, 15.4 x 21 cm
Lower left: Jozef Israëls
1955.777

Jozef Israëls, a leading artist of the Hague School, stands out among his colleagues for infusing his landscapes with a human element. Instead of making figures secondary to nature, Israëls focused his compositions on people and their experiences. Israëls's small panel painting *Woman on the Shore* demonstrates his fascination with peasant life in the fishing villages of the Netherlands that began in the 1850s and lasted throughout his career. This picture shows a young woman in traditional Dutch costume sitting on a grassy dune that overlooks the sea. The woman's gaze seems to be fixed on two ships near the horizon. She keeps her hands occupied with knitting as, presumably, she waits for her father or husband to return from fishing. As he did in *Woman on the Shore*, Israëls depicted