



**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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James Tissot

French, 1836–1902

326 | *Chrysanthemums* c. 1874–76

Oil on canvas, 118.4 x 76.2 cm

Lower left of center: J. J. Tissot

Acquired by the Clark in honor of David S. Brooke (Institute Director, 1977–94), 1994
1994.2

After the fall of the Paris Commune, James Tissot moved to London, where he lived and worked for over a decade, playing a vibrant role in the capital city's art scene. He began exhibiting genre scenes of men and women in historical costume at the Royal Academy in 1872, but these period pieces gave way to canvases of fashionably dressed women and men pursuing the pleasures of modern life, whether attending a musical evening, as in *Hush! (The Concert)* (1875; Manchester Art Gallery), relaxing at an alfresco luncheon, as in *Holyday* (c. 1876; Tate Britain, London), or boating on the Thames, as in *Portsmouth Dockyard* (c. 1877; Tate Britain, London).

In *Chrysanthemums*, Tissot paints an intimate view of modern life. A female gardener pauses in her adjustment of a pot of chrysanthemums. Her guarded expression suggests not only that we, the viewers, have interrupted her work, but also that she is experiencing a private, contemplative moment. The woman is warmly dressed for fall gardening, the chrysanthemum's season. Over a black dress, she wears an ivory tunic with fringe at the sleeves and hem. She has rolled up the sleeves of both garments in preparation for work. A yellow shawl, draped around her back and shoulders, is crossed at her chest and tied in one knot at her back.¹ Her ensemble is completed by a stole of brown fur at her throat and a yellow bonnet, secured under her chin with black and yellow ribbons. Chrysanthemums in varying hues of yellow, orange, and white, and a plant each with pink and lavender blooms surround her and vie for dominance of the canvas.

The identity of the woman depicted in the painting is unknown, although she should not be confused with Tissot's mistress, Kathleen Newton, the Irish divorcée who modeled for many of Tissot's paintings from 1876 until her death from tuberculosis in 1882.² The woman in *Chrysanthemums* appears in several other Tissot canvases of the mid-1870s, and was probably

a professional model. Michael Wentworth linked her with the recumbent invalid in *A Convalescent* (c. 1876; Graves Gallery, Museums Sheffield),³ but an even stronger resemblance may be seen in the woman who wears a striped dress and raises the flags in *Still on Top* (c. 1873; Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand). Her full lips, pointed nose, and high cheekbones resonate with the features of the woman in the Clark picture.

One is somewhat hampered in making comparisons between the woman in *Chrysanthemums* and models in other Tissot paintings given the imprecise rendering of her face. Tissot employed loose brushwork in rendering her visage, making her face slightly out of focus, her eyes smoky around the edges—especially her left one, which is also obscured by shadow—and lips formed of brief but elegant smudges of paint. The model's left cheek and nose are composed of broad, unblended strokes of paint. Tissot's loose, confident brushwork extends to creamy strokes of yellow paint of varying hues that compose the woman's shawl. Left unblended, this brushwork gives the garment texture and imparts a sense of volume to the woman's form, while supplying the viewer with evidence of the artist's hand.

It is difficult to imagine a model posing in this awkward crouch for an extended period, unless Tissot supplied her with a small stool on which to sit, which he then omitted when painting the canvas. It may be that Tissot worked from a photograph when painting *Chrysanthemums*. Alternating blurry and crisply painted areas—the woman's face and several highly detailed chrysanthemums, for example—suggest a camera lens that focuses on one aspect of a subject at the expense of others. Tissot did, in fact, use photographs in constructing some of his compositions. In 1946, Marita Ross discovered the existence of a handful of photographs of Tissot, Kathleen Newton, and her children, in poses that the artist directly translated into known paintings.⁴ Tissot also photographed his finished paintings; he collected these photographs into albums as a record of his work.⁵ To date, however, no photograph of a woman in this pose has come to light.

While the woman is an integral part of the canvas, giving the scene a narrative thread as well as psychological tension, she is eclipsed by the hundreds of flowers that surround her, and seems almost crushed by their exuberance. Tissot emphasized the importance of the flowers by titling the work *Chrysanthemums*, when he might have instead chosen a title that acknowledged the woman.



Introduced to England in the late eighteenth century, the chrysanthemum was especially popular in the second half of the nineteenth century. This autumn-blooming plant was celebrated for its vibrant colors, and its hardiness made it easy for amateur and professional gardeners alike to cultivate. Chrysanthemums could also tolerate the pollution of crowded cities like London.⁶

Tissot's vibrant canvas, which features not one but several cultivated classes of this plant species, reveals his awareness of the variety and popularity of this autumn flower. For example, directly above the woman's head are rust-colored, wispy blooms of the brush and thistle class of chrysanthemum, while peach and yellow blooms to the right of these, with petals of varying lengths, are of the irregular incurve class. An orange flower at far right, with tightly structured petals arranged in a globular form, represents the popular pompon variety.⁷

In 1873, Tissot acquired No. 17 Grove End Road, a large suburban villa in Saint John's Wood, an area west of Regent's Park. He made extensive changes to the building and grounds. A large studio and an iron and glass conservatory were constructed, doubling the size of the house. Tissot also redesigned the grounds, installing, near a lily pool, an iron colonnade modeled after one in the Parc Monceau, Paris. Tissot used his studio, conservatory, and grounds as the setting for many of his idyllic pictures, especially those that feature Mrs. Newton and her children.⁸ The studio and conservatory are most fully pictured in the painting *In the Conservatory (The Rivals)* (c. 1875–78; private collection/Richard Green Gallery, London). Mature palm trees and potted exotic plants fill a lofty space articulated by glass and white-painted iron supports, while fashionably dressed women and men drink tea and converse in a parlor-like space, which was actually Tissot's studio.

Chrysanthemums was likely staged in Tissot's conservatory, despite the fact that the woman seems dressed for cool weather out-of-doors. Panes of glass are visible in the upper left corner of the canvas. Probably an exterior wall of Tissot's conservatory, this translucent material is also visible in the interstices between the chrysanthemum blooms and their leaves along the left half of the canvas. Instead of the white-painted trellises that appear in *In the Conservatory*, a black trellis emerges from the sea of flowers in the upper left corner. A similar structure figures prominently in another painting, *Dans la Serre (In the Conservatory)*, a work also thought to have been staged in the greenhouse at 17 Grove End.⁹

Tissot arranged for *Chrysanthemums*, along with nine other paintings, to appear at the inaugural summer exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery in New Bond Street in 1877.¹⁰ Opened by amateur artists Sir Coutts Lindsay and his wife Blanche (née Rothschild), the Grosvenor provided an alternative to the Royal Academy of Art, the traditional exhibition venue for British artists, which was at this time increasingly criticized for its conservative admission standards. Unlike the Royal Academy, where the number of paintings accepted for display made it necessary to cram them side by side and stack them from floor to ceiling in a manner that could overwhelm, Sir Coutts limited the number of paintings accepted to the Grosvenor, and specified that the works be given at least six inches of space, and preferably one foot, between them. At the Grosvenor, Tissot's paintings were grouped together in the East Gallery. The walls in this room were hung with crimson silk damask, which no doubt resonated with the rich palette of yellows and oranges that are prominent in Tissot's *Chrysanthemums* and *Holyday*.

Tissot's exhibited paintings were well received by the critic for *The Times*, who wrote generally of Tissot's submissions: "Here we are struck with the striking variety in the painter's choice of subjects, and the corresponding change in his manner of painting."¹¹ No doubt the author was impressed by the juxtaposition of a work like *Chrysanthemums*, with its fluid passages of paint, and the more tightly painted *Plymouth Dockyard* (c. 1877; Tate Britain, London), where the delicate features of a woman in a striped gown are carefully articulated, and buildings and boats in the distance are rendered with keen attention to detail. *The Times* critic, appreciative of Tissot's handling of paint, found much to admire in *Chrysanthemums*: this canvas showed, "in particular, his great command of all the executive resources of his art."¹² John Ruskin also noticed Tissot's paintings, remarking that "their dexterity and brilliancy are apt to make the spectator forget their conscientiousness [*sic*]."¹³ Ruskin found fault with the subjects, which Tissot had largely taken from contemporary life: "Most of them are, unhappily, mere coloured photographs of vulgar society," he lamented.¹⁴ Ruskin preferred the one symbolic work Tissot exhibited, *Triumph of the Will: The Challenge*, precisely because it moved beyond contemporary affairs and addressed the timeless and noble themes of good judgment and fortitude.¹⁵

Edward Hermon (1822–1881), a cotton industry entrepreneur and conservative member of Parliament from Preston, near Manchester, was the origi-

nal owner of *Chrysanthemums*. During his lifetime, Hermon amassed a significant collection of modern paintings, which included works by artists such as J. M. W. Turner, Edwin Landseer, John Everett Millais, and Edwin Long, among others. Hermon arranged his collection of seventy-odd paintings in a large picture gallery at his estate, Wyfold Court.¹⁶ How he acquired Tissot's *Chrysanthemums* is unclear. He sometimes commissioned works of art for his collection, and he also hired artists to produce decorative canvases for specific architectural spaces at Wyfold Court.¹⁷ Hermon acquired paintings through dealers as well. He may have commissioned *Chrysanthemums*, but it seems more likely that he met Tissot through a London dealer and arranged to purchase the finished canvas directly from Tissot's studio. Why *Chrysanthemums* appealed to Hermon can only be guessed, but the wealthy industrialist did construct several hothouses on his property at Wyfold Court, so perhaps Tissot's painting appealed to his interest in horticulture. AG

PROVENANCE Edward Hermon, London (by 1877–82, his sale, Christie's, London, 13 May 1882, no. 80, sold to Tooth); [Arthur Tooth and Son, London, from 1882]; Surgeon-Major John Ewart Martin, South Africa; private collection, South Africa, by descent from Martin; sale, Phillips, London, 14 Dec. 1993, no. 67; [Christopher Wood Gallery, London, sold to the Clark, 1994]; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1994.

EXHIBITIONS London 1877, East Gallery, no. 24, lent by Hermon; New Haven–Québec–Buffalo 1999–2000, not in cat. (exhibited in Buffalo only); Copenhagen 2000, pp. 46–47, 163, no. 60, fig. 20.

REFERENCES Laver 1936, p. 73; Wentworth 1984, p. 202; Kern et al. 1996, pp. 84–85, ill.; *Antiques* 1997, p. 528, pl. 14; Satullo 2002, p. 41; Rand 2005, p. 299, fig. 18.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is an unlined, moderate-weight canvas (16 threads/cm) on a six-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. Pinholes in the corners suggest either that the picture was painted prior to stretching or that something was once pinned to the front, such as a drawing. There are a series of odd, wide cracks in the paint located in the crossbar area, possibly caused by an irregular support placed below the picture during painting. There are stretcher creases along the top bar and the central crossbars, which also have extra vertical and horizontal creases alongside them. This may suggest that the stretcher has been replaced and that the original one had wider crossbars. The extra set of nail holes in the tacking margins and the wide dark lines along the painted edges also point to a restretching. In 2010, cupped and quilted corner stress-crack networks in the two upper corners and in the lower left were consolidated with gelatin and heat, along with parts of the center stretcher creases.

Scattered lifted cracks and small areas of delaminating paint in the white flowers were also set down with gelatin and heat. There is some staining on the back of the canvas from varnish removal. Hamish Dewar of London cleaned the painting in early 1994, just prior to the Clark's purchase. There are retouched losses in a few flowers near the top right edge and minor retouches in the skirt and along the edges. Ultraviolet light reveals a thin layer of older varnish in the darker colors, and on close inspection, yellow varnish can be seen trapped in the impastos. The color saturation and surface reflectance are even, although the crack edges catch the light.

The ground is a commercially applied pale yellow-gray layer, thin enough to allow the fabric weave to show. The only part of the image that had any underdrawing visible in infrared reflectography was the face, where hazy, imprecise lines, perhaps charcoal, were visible. Under low magnification, there appear to be broader lines for the hands and costume. Reserves were left in the greenery for the placement of the figure and the flower heads. The hands and face are very thinly painted. The flowers range from thinly painted examples to moderately thick impasto work. The upper left corner is less finished than the rest of the picture. Edges of the costume overlap the background colors, and there is a change in the position of the knot in the shawl, visible to the unaided eye and now painted over by green foliage.

1. Tissot often depicted the same articles of clothing in his paintings of fashionably dressed young women, both within single pictures and across canvases. The tunic and yellow scarf with its black embroidery also appear on a model in *Holyday*.
2. For more on Kathleen Newton, and the discovery of her identity, see Brooke 1968.
3. Michael Wentworth in Phillips 1993, p. 66, no. 67.
4. Lilian Hervey, Newton's niece, responded to Ross's plea for information published in *Everybody's Weekly* in June 1945. In the follow-up article one year later, Ross quoted Hervey on Tissot's process. After an idea was chosen, Newton and Tissot posed, and "then Tissot got his studio assistant—a good amateur photographer—to record the scene with his camera" (Ross 1946). These photographs are frequently reproduced in the Tissot literature, including the retrospective exhibition catalogue (Providence–Toronto 1968).
5. See Misfeldt 1982. Four albums, arranged chronologically, were formed by the artist. Unfortunately, the album for the years 1871–78 is missing.
6. One contemporary observed: "The chrysanthemum is thoroughly cosmopolitan, thriving alike in smoky cities or suburban villages, and no plant is so much at home in large towns" (Thorpe 1884).
7. Today the National Chrysanthemum Society (United States) recognizes thirteen classes of chrysanthemums, determined by bloom type.
8. Mireille Galinou has reconstructed Tissot's garden and conservatory, which were altered significantly by the

subsequent occupant of the house, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Galinou locates a number of paintings within Tissot's estate in Galinou 1989.

9. *Dans la Serre* was offered at Christie's, New York, 19 April 2005, no. 66. Krystyna Matyjaszkiewicz identifies *monstera* plants in both *Dans la Serre* and *In the Conservatory*, and suggests that the former was also painted in Tissot's Saint John's Wood conservatory. See Christie's 2005b, p. 86.
10. The other canvases included *Summer* (no. 17), *A Portrait* (no. 18), *The Gallery of the H. M. S. Calcutta (Portsmouth)* (no. 19), *The Widower* (no. 20), *Meditation* (no. 21), the first canvas from *The Triumph of Will* series, entitled *The Challenge* (no. 22), *Holyday* (no. 23), *Portsmouth Dockyard* (no. 25), and *Gossiping* (no. 26).
11. *Times* 1877, p. 10.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Ruskin 1903–12, vol. 29, p. 161.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Triumph of the Will: The Challenge* was offered at Sotheby's, New York, 16 Feb. 1994, no. 117.
16. Designed by architect George Somers Clarke, Wyfold Court was built in the French Flamboyant Gothic style and was completed in the late 1870s. The picture gallery, measuring 100 feet in length, occupied the entire east front of the house. See Binney 2000 for more on the history and renovation of this country house.
17. Henry Stacy Marks and William Chappell painted canvases for Wyfold Court, the latter artist's paintings fitting within arches in the corridor. See Howell 1970, p. 249.

Auguste Toulmouche

French, 1829–1890

327 | *Woman and Roses* 1879

Oil on canvas, 62.8 x 44.7 cm
Lower left: A. Toulmouche. 1879.
1955.877

Toulmouche was one of the best known and most commercially successful of the genre painters who specialized in scenes depicting fashionably dressed young women during the 1860s and 1870s. Initially he followed the example of his teacher Charles Gleyre (1806–1874) by presenting his figures in antique dress, but by the late 1850s, he had decisively turned to contemporary dress. The dealer Adolphe Goupil purchased much of his work and also ensured its cir-

ulation by publishing photographic reproductions of many of his paintings, from the early 1860s onwards.

Many of Toulmouche's paintings of the 1860s are set in lavish interiors, like those of Alfred Stevens, who was often closely associated with him in the critical writing of the period. In the 1870s, he began to situate some of his scenes in gardens, including the canvas exhibited as *Summer* at the Salon in 1876 and again at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1878, depicting an elaborately dressed woman with a parasol picking a flower from a rosebush (private collection)¹—an allegory of the season analogous to Stevens's contemporary images of the Four Seasons (see cats. 319–22). He exhibited another painting of this type with the title *In the Conservatory* at the Salon in 1883; it was immediately purchased by the Musée des Beaux-Arts in his birthplace, Nantes.² *Woman and Roses* is very comparable to these canvases, in both scale and imagery, but there is no known record of its original title or information about its early provenance and exhibition history; Toulmouche did not exhibit at the Salon between 1879 and 1882.

Almost everything in *Woman and Roses* is emphatically artificial. The flowers and plants are carefully regimented in front of a high stone wall with a Classical pilaster at its corner, while the woman's body is just as artfully shaped by the tight corsetry beneath her elegant day dress. Her body language, as she leans over to smell the roses and holds her parasol behind her back, is just as carefully staged. Only the glimpse of trees beyond the fencing at the top right hints at the natural world that has been so rigorously excluded from the woman's space.

The meticulous execution of *Woman and Roses* is in part the result of Toulmouche's training under Charles Gleyre—a very different response to Gleyre's methods from that of Toulmouche's cousin by marriage Claude Monet, who was urged by Toulmouche when they met around 1862 to enter an academic studio.³ Beyond this, Toulmouche seems to have accentuated the precision and finesse of his paint handling so that his pictures could in some sense be viewed as the painted equivalents of the lavish costumes they depicted; pictures and costumes alike clearly belonged to the same world of luxury consumables. Émile Zola, however, in reviewing Toulmouche's Salon exhibits in 1876, including *Summer*, considered the paintings as analogous not to the costumes themselves, but to the fashion plates that advertised them, thus reducing them to the lowly world of publicity.⁴ 卍