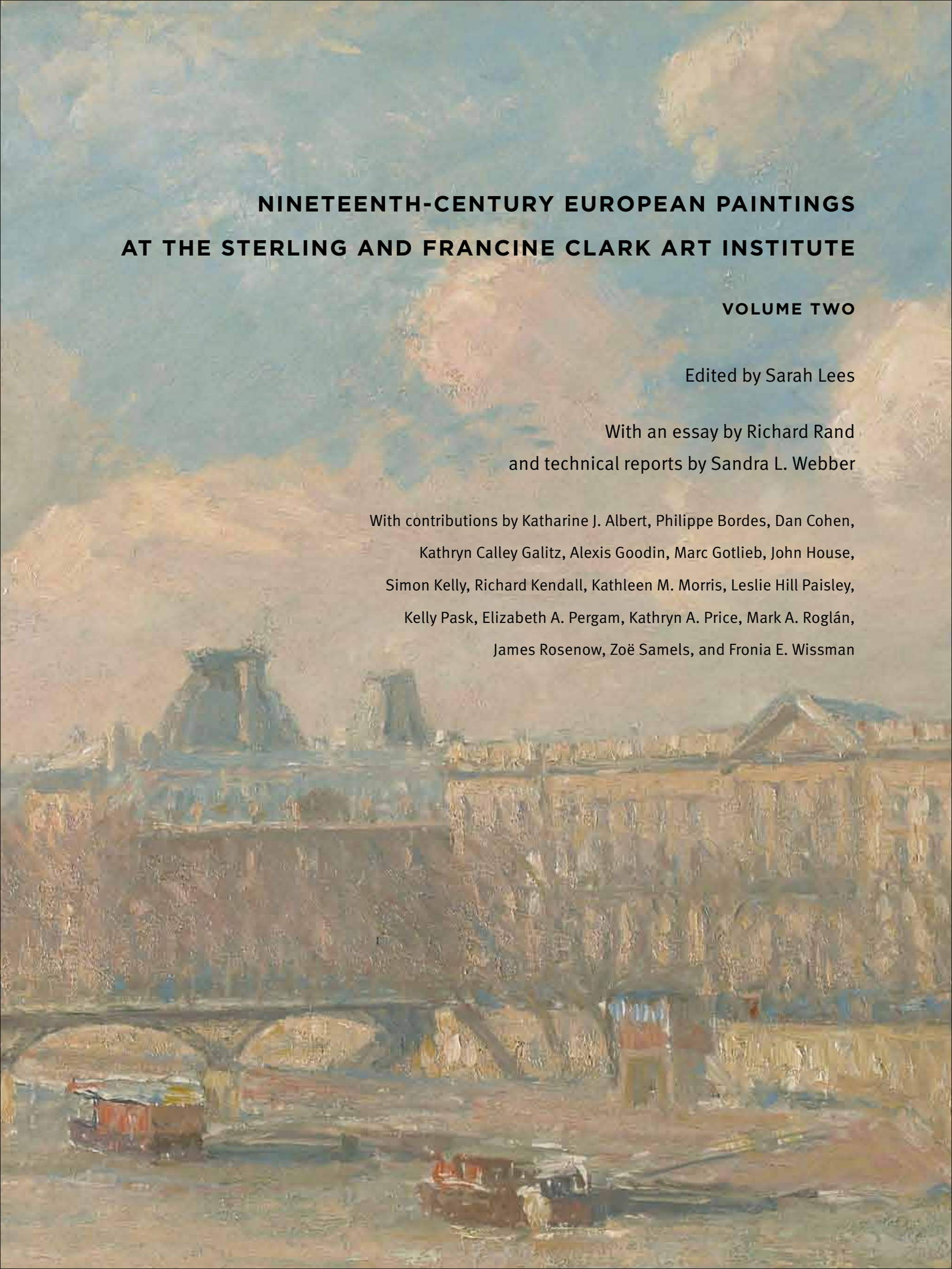

# NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE

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

22. Jerrold Ziff was the first to show the link between the statues in Turner's "Vatican Fragments" (Tate Britain, London, TB CLXXX) and those of *What You Will!*; Ziff 1965, p. 64n30.
23. The painting was offered for sale at H. Darell-Brown's posthumous sale, Christie's, London, 23 May 1924, no. 42, ill., but was bought in.
24. Armstrong mistakenly states that the painting was once in the Swinburne Collection.

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**341** | **View off Margate, Evening** c. 1840

Oil on canvas, 32.1 x 48.9 cm
Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton
2007.8.117

Though painted at about the same time as the ambitious *Rockets and Blue Lights (Close at Hand) to Warn Steamboats of Shoal Water* (cat. 342), this modest oil of a stretch of beach from which a mother and two children watch a small sailboat stands as a contrast to the much larger canvas. The theme of nature versus technology at the heart of Turner's 1840 exhibit at the Royal Academy, as well as its chromatic relationship to *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston),[1] also exhibited that year, marks *Rockets and Blue Lights* as a summa of the artist's technical and conceptual preoccupations in his later works. *View off Margate, Evening*, a painting first viewed by the public more than a decade after Turner's death, speaks more to the altogether less well-known private side of the artist's life, both in its history and in its subject matter.

The painting's first public viewing was very brief, on the occasion of its sale at Christie's on 24–25 March 1865. In the sale catalogue, the Clark oil was given the title *A View off Margate—evening*.[2] John Pound, who was known to be the seller although he was not named in the catalogue, was the son by her first marriage of Sophia Caroline Booth, at whose lodging house in Margate Turner stayed between 1827 and 1846 on his visits to the Kent coastal town. In 1846, Turner brought Mrs. Booth to London to look after his house at 119 Cheyne Walk in Chelsea, and their relationship even prompted his neighbors to call him "Mr. Booth."[3] Thus, the early identification of the scene as Margate can probably be attributed to the painting's connection to Sophia Booth. Turner's relationship to the town of Margate dates to his childhood. Although he was born in London, to a father who was a barber and wig-maker and a mother who was the granddaughter of a butcher, his mother, Mary Turner née Marshall, suffered from mental problems, and, in the 1780s, the young Turner was sent to live with her relatives in Margate.

Described in 1858 as a "suburb of London,"[4] even before the advent of the railroad, Margate was easily accessible from the city, and Turner returned to the Kent town frequently throughout his life. His earliest depictions of the town focus on the shipping activity near the pier, such as his *Old Margate Pier* (Ernest H. Gaskell collection),[5] which was probably exhibited at Turner's own gallery in 1804, and *Margate* (Tate Britain, London; displayed at Petworth House),[6] which he exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1808. Interestingly, two watercolors of Margate, which were painted in the 1820s,[7] were owned by John Ruskin, as were two later watercolors.[8] Although in a passage in the 1856 *The Harbours of England*, Ruskin disparages Margate as "utterly devoid of all picturesque or romantic interest," he praises one of the watercolors he owned, now in the Ashmolean, as "very beautiful and highly characteristic."[9]

While the watercolor Ruskin discusses is clearly identifiable as Margate, the Clark oil, with its minimum of detail in both shore and water, has been the subject of debate over the identity of its location. When the painting was next shown to the public in an exhibition at the Tate in 1977, having been in the collection of the Rugby School for ninety years, Evelyn Joll adopted the proposal of "a former Curator of the Rugby School" that the ghostly ship shrouded by fog on the left side of the canvas was on the Goodwin Sands, a notorious sandbank visible from Ramsgate, just to the south, but not Margate, and endorsed the title *Off Ramsgate (?)*, while noting that any precise identification of such a sketchy image would be difficult.[10]

Andrew Wilton disputes both this title and Butlin and Joll's association of the painting with two other small canvases that Turner painted at about the same time. Butlin and Joll's reason for connecting the Clark painting to *Margate Harbour* (Sudley House, Liverpool)[11] and *Morning after the Wreck* (National Museum of Wales, Cardiff)[12] is the size of the canvases and their shared coastal subject. Wilton notes that the differences—the simpler composition and the sketchier paint application of the Clark painting—outweigh the

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similarities. Instead, Wilton proposes a comparison with *The New Moon; or "I've lost my Boat, You shan't have your Hoop"* (Tate Britain, London),[13] which Turner exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1840, the same year as *Rockets and Blue Lights*.[14] In that work, a figural group of a woman flanked by two children appears on the left side of the canvas, and although the comparable group is on the right side of the present work, Wilton suggests that their similar configuration indicates Turner may have produced the Clark painting in the process of developing *The New Moon*.

Wilton's analysis of the two paintings is compelling; moreover, the fact that the Clark painting was not exhibited in Turner's lifetime seems to give it additional significance. For an artist supremely conscious of the importance of public exhibition, who went so far as to make an unprecedented bequest of his paintings, drawings, and sketchbooks to the nation, the private side of Turner remains as obscure as the setting of the small canvas now known as *View off Margate, Evening*. Less mysterious is the appeal of Turner's later works, with their near-abstract application of pigment, to the twentieth-century eye. While these works were met with derisive criticism by Turner's contemporaries, they have guaranteed the artist his place in the modernist pantheon.[15] EP

**PROVENANCE** The artist, probably given to Booth; Sophia Caroline Booth, Margate, given to Pound; John Pound, her son (until 1865, sale, Christie's, London, 24–25 Mar. 1865, no. 205, as *A View off Margate—evening*, sold to Agnew's); [Agnew's, London, sold to Holdsworth, 1866]; W. J. Holdsworth (1866–81, sold to Agnew's, Jan. 1881); [Agnew's, London, sold to Blake, Dec. 1881, as *Breeze off Margate*]; T. W. Jex Blake (from 1881, probably given to Rugby School, 1887); Rugby School Art Museum (probably 1887–1982, sale, Sotheby's, London, 17 Mar. 1982, no. 51, as *Off Ramsgate*, sold to Leger Galleries); [Leger Galleries, London, sold to Flacks, probably Sept. 1983]; Alan Flacks (probably from 1983, sold to Spink); [Spink, London, sold to Manton, 2 Nov. 1998]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1998–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark, as *Off Ramsgate*); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

**EXHIBITIONS** London 1977a, p. 20, no. 20, ill., as *Off Ramsgate (?)*; Mexico City–Caracas 1979, no. 8, as *Alfrededores de Ransgate?*; Tokyo–Kyōto 1986, p. 122, no. 39, ill., as *Off Ramsgate (?)*; Toronto 1995, no cat.; Williamstown 2007a, no cat.

**REFERENCES** Butlin and Joll 1977, vol. 1, p. 262, no. 479, vol. 2, pl. 484, as *Off Ramsgate (?)*; Wilton 1979, pp. 292–93, no. P479, as *Off Ramsgate (?)*; Butlin and Joll 1984, vol. 1, no. 479, vol. 2, pl. 480, as *Off Ramsgate (?)*; Leger Galleries 1992, p. 142, ill., as *Shipping off Ramsgate*; Wilton 2001, pp. 81–83, no. 23, ill., as *Off Ramsgate (?)*; Williamstown–Manchester–Glasgow 2003–4, p. 128.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a moderate-weight canvas having a weave of 16 threads per cm. It has been wax-lined to a canvas having a weave of 16 x 19 threads per cm. An older glue lining may have been replaced by the present, rather dry wax lining, and the tacking margins have long been missing. The six-member stretcher likely dates to the earlier lining. There may be pinholes in all four corners. There is vertical wrinkling in the center of the ocean, as well as overlapped paint. There are vertical splits in the paint in the right foreground and a plowed-up lip of paint along the lower edge from early framing pressure. The paint in the hulk on the left horizon looks abraded, but this could be an intentional wiping technique by the artist. There are many inpainted losses in the green water in the left foreground, as well as old dislodged paint that presents an uneven surface. Some chipping paint seems to be due to interlayer cleavage problems. In 2009, new flaking in this same area was consolidated with Beva 371, and losses and abrasions were filled and inpainted as needed. In ultraviolet light, some of the earlier retouchings look like they are lying below the new varnish, and some fluorescence in the green water may indicate residual old varnish. The surface reflectance is fairly even.

The ground is an off-white commercially applied layer, which shows through in many areas of the image. Infrared viewing of the image suggests that the form in the lower right was sketched with brown ink and a brush, based on its resistance to the oil-based ground layer. The shape or orientation of this detail is also somewhat different than the final image. There is evidence of a possible wreck sketched in to the right of the small figural group, and possibly a small sail on the horizon above the left child. The shape of the pinkish sail is more defined in infrared than in normal light, possibly due to a loss of detail glazes from overcleaning. There are some simple curved diagonal lines along the central horizon. The filled losses in the lower left are also visible in infrared light.

Much of the paint is thin and vehicular, except in the sky, sea foam, sail, and figures. Most impastos are very soft with low rounded profiles, except one odd paint chunk at the far right behind the figures and a second thick deposit at the left top edge. The nearly transparent ship was painted over the finished sky. Some amber-colored pigment in the lower right has broken into islands, possibly indicating high resin content. The paint application in the left clouds looks like smooth palette-knife work. Black ink or watercolor may have been used in the hulk's broken mast and the shadows in the water below the hull.

1. BJ 385.
2. Christie's 1865, p. 24, no. 205.
3. Wilton 1979, p. 18.
3. Murray 1858, p. 199.
5. BJ 51.
6. BJ 78.
7. Wilton 1979, pp. 355, 387–88, nos. 489 and 757.
8. Wilton 1979, p. 467, nos. 1391 and 1397.
9. Turner 1856, p. 39.
10. London 1977a, p. 20. At the time of the exhibition, Joll did not identify the source of the suggestion that the ship is grounded on Goodwin Sands; he did cite his informant (though not by name) in his and Martin Butlin's catalogue raisonné (Butlin and Joll 1984, vol. 1, p. 292).
11. BJ 475.
12. BJ 478.
13. BJ 386.
14. Wilton 2001, pp. 82–83.
15. A landmark in this interpretation of Turner was Lawrence Gowing's 1966 exhibition, *Turner: Imagination and Reality*, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

## 342 | Rockets and Blue Lights (Close at Hand) to Warn Steamboats of Shoal Water 1840

Oil on canvas, 91.7 x 122.3 cm

1955.37

One of the most important works of his final decade, *Rockets and Blue Lights (Close at Hand) to Warn Steamboats of Shoal Water* presents a theme that dominated Joseph Mallord William Turner's entire career. Inaugurating the final phase in Turner's lifelong treatment of maritime subjects, *Rockets and Blue Lights* is a key statement of the epic confrontation of nature and industrialism. Moreover, Turner's engagement with scientific theories of color encourages the viewer to connect the artist's personal technique with the chemical process driving the advanced technology of steam power—the transformation of physical states.

Any discussion of this work, however, must take into account its present appearance. Over the years the painting has suffered considerable damage, to the point that much of the surface now visible is in fact the