



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

**VOLUME TWO**

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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,  
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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3. I am grateful to Jude Kundmueller for our conversation about the flowers depicted in this painting.
4. Redouté used high quality vellum for his watercolors of flowers, many of which are today in pristine condition, the parchment surface smooth and largely wrinkle-free. See, for example, the original drawings for *Les Liliacées*, reproduced in Mallary and Mallary 1986, discussed on p. 20.
5. The dealer Knoedler, who sold Clark the painting, suggested that this canvas may have been a model for *velours grégoire*, or printed fabric made in Lyon, France. See the Clark's curatorial file.
6. RSC Diary, 25 Feb. 1941.

## Henri Regnault

French, 1843–1871

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### 260 | Scene from the Spanish Inquisition

c. 1868–70

Oil on canvas, 86 x 65.3 cm

Lower right: HR [monogram]

Gift of the Joseph F. McCrindle Collection

2009.12.4

This colorful painting appears to show a chaotic scene of religious terror, set in front of a carved architectural façade of stone with a protruding balcony at the top and a deep arched doorway in the center. Three main clusters of figures compose the lower three-fourths of the composition. Cutting a diagonal across the lower right, two men drag the body of another across the ground while a fourth man hunches over the unconscious figure's lower half. Behind them on the left, two robed figures, one possibly a monk, flank a priest-like figure dressed in white with a peaked hat. A spray of brilliant red blood stains the front of the man's white robe, pooling on the floor in front of him. Immediately behind the priest figure, a large flag or banner is hoisted into the air, perhaps heralding the presence of a religious envoy. Behind these two groups is a jumbled scene where bodies and other colorful forms spill out of the archway, where a large pile of debris partially blocks the dark entrance. Several figures are attempting to scale this pile and cross over the archway's threshold, while others appear to be emerging from within this void. To the right of the archway, an unknown mass, perhaps a clothed figure, disappears

over a wall into the darkness. The painting entered the Clark from the Joseph F. McCrindle Collection with the provocative, if unverified, title *Scene from the Spanish Inquisition*. This idea was probably prompted by the clothing of the standing group at left and what may be interpreted as the torture of the prone foreground figure, but the precise subject remains unclear.

Given its ostensible subject, the picture was most likely executed sometime between 1868 and 1870 while Regnault was living in Spain and Morocco. After being awarded the Prix de Rome in 1866 for his painting *Thetis Giving the Weapons of Vulcan to Achilles* (École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris), the artist soon moved to Italy and began several history paintings. Less than two years later, he petitioned for permission to continue his work elsewhere in Europe while still receiving a Prix de Rome bursary. He traveled first to Madrid and Granada, where he studied the work of Velázquez and Goya. By 1870, Regnault and fellow artist Georges Clairin (1843–1919) had moved to Morocco, where they had a house and painting studio constructed. Later that year, the Franco-Prussian War broke out, and although his Rome Prize made him exempt from military service, Regnault enlisted as a foot soldier. He was killed on 19 January 1871, shortly before the war's end. A monument honoring the artist by Henri-Michel-Antoine Chapu (1833–1891) was erected at the École des Beaux-Arts the following year.

With its slashing brushwork and cursory representation of detail, this painting likely served as a large oil sketch for a larger oil painting that was never completed. In keeping with his academic training, Regnault often produced a series of sketches, both in pencil and in oil, before executing a finished work. This process might stretch over several years, as it did for his oil painting *Automedon with the Horses of Achilles* (1868; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), which went through several drafts of pencil sketches and at least two oil sketches, both of which mirror the McCrindle painting in their technique and careful placement of color. The sketchy application of paint also recalls several of Regnault's earlier works in the still life and history painting genres, including *Cavalier* (1861; private collection, Paris), *Death of the Deer* (1865; private collection, Paris), *Scene of Battle* (1864; private collection, France), and *Sketch for The Burial of Christ* (1864; private collection, France), the last of which also features a group of figures receding into a darkened arched doorway.<sup>1</sup> These four works, like the McCrindle painting, are animated and colorful, with





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subject matter that fills up the entire composition. Many of the figures are roughly outlined with short, parallel strokes of paint analogous to those found in the Clark's painting. Perhaps the closest comparison, however, is to another action-filled scene of violence, *Attack on a Moorish Palace* (c. 1868–70; J.-F. Heim collection, Paris).<sup>2</sup> This somewhat more finished oil study centers on a larger, more detailed arched doorway, and shows more explicit acts of bloodshed, but the themes of uncontrolled violent forces and a type of exoticism supported by either geographic or temporal distance are shared with the Clark's painting. While

the exact subject matter of the Clark work may remain unknown, its historical subject, dynamic composition, and vibrant color place this painting securely within Regnault's oeuvre. What we are left wondering, then, is what the final work would have looked like if not for the young artist's untimely death. zs

**PROVENANCE** [Julius H. Weitzner, New York and London];<sup>3</sup> Joseph F. McCrindle, New York and London (d. 2008); Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation, New York (2008–9, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2009.

**EXHIBITIONS** None

**REFERENCES** None

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The painting was executed on a medium-weight canvas with a weave of 22 threads/cm; it has an old glue lining with a coarse weave of 13 threads/cm. The dark oxidized six-member stretcher may be original. The artist's tacking margins were removed, and the edges of the lining canvas are fraying. The surface of the painting is lumpy due to a combination of occasional impastos and a weave impression from the two fabrics. A cluster of old small tears and creases in the upper portion of the image may be the result of the painting tearing from its top tacking edge many years ago. There are scattered ground and paint losses around the edges, in the corners, and at the tears and creases. There are also stretcher creases, and some age cracks have rigid tenting and sharp raised intersections. There are traction cracks in the darkest passages. The painting was cleaned of heavy grime and brown varnish in 2011. Small tented areas were consolidated, the painting was varnished, and losses were filled and inpainted.

The ground layer appears to be comprised of two or more white layers, although it is difficult to determine whether or not they were commercially applied. No underdrawing was detected. The paint layer is a combination of brushstrokes, palette knife work, and sgraffito lines through the wet paint.

1. For more on these works, see Saint-Cloud 1991–92, pp. 37, 39–41.
2. See *ibid.*, p. 108.
3. According to the Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation, Joseph F. McCrindle's grandmother, Edith Mosler Feder, owned a Regnault. The subject and title of Feder's Regnault is unknown. It is possible that this is the same picture now at the Clark. See the Clark's curatorial file.