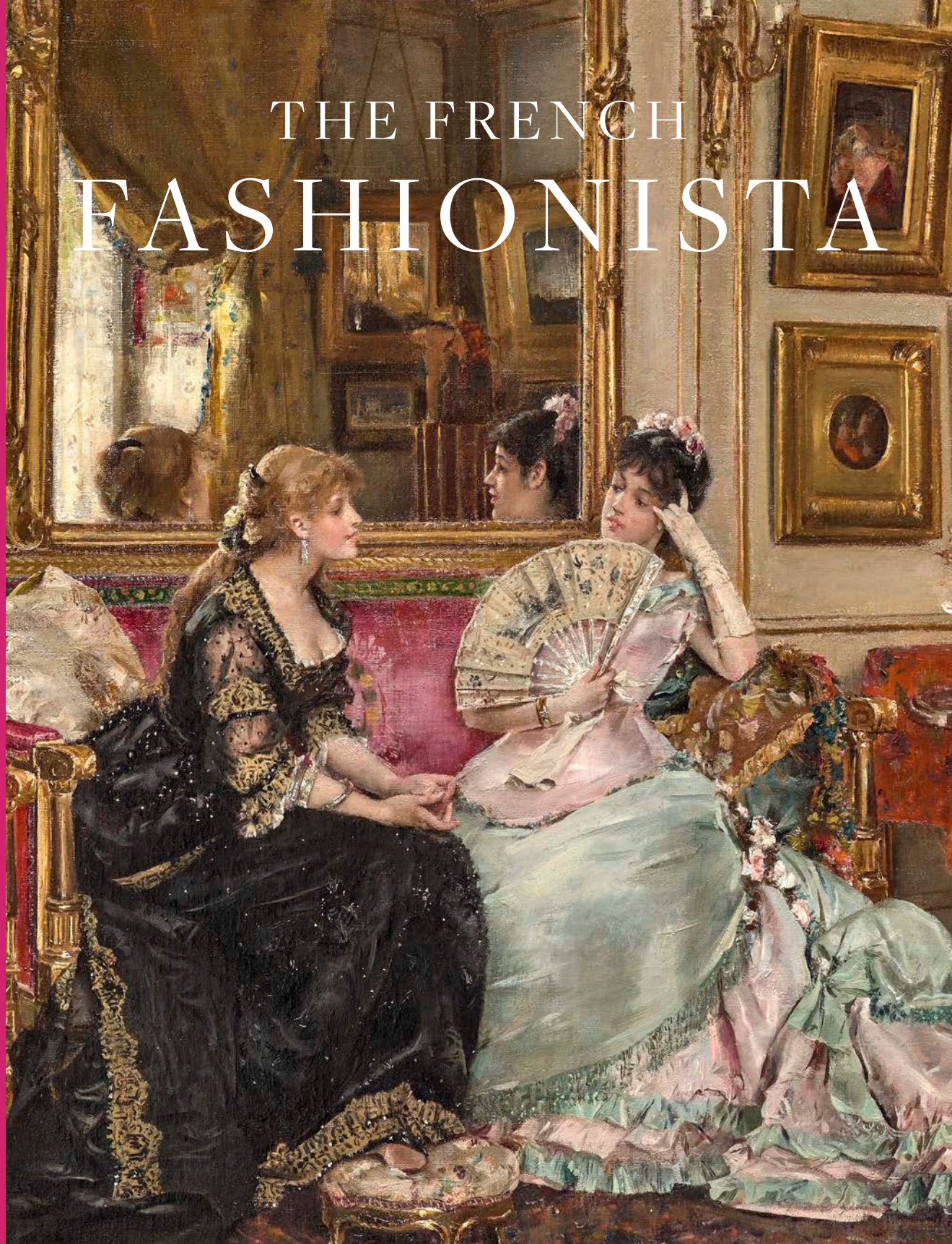
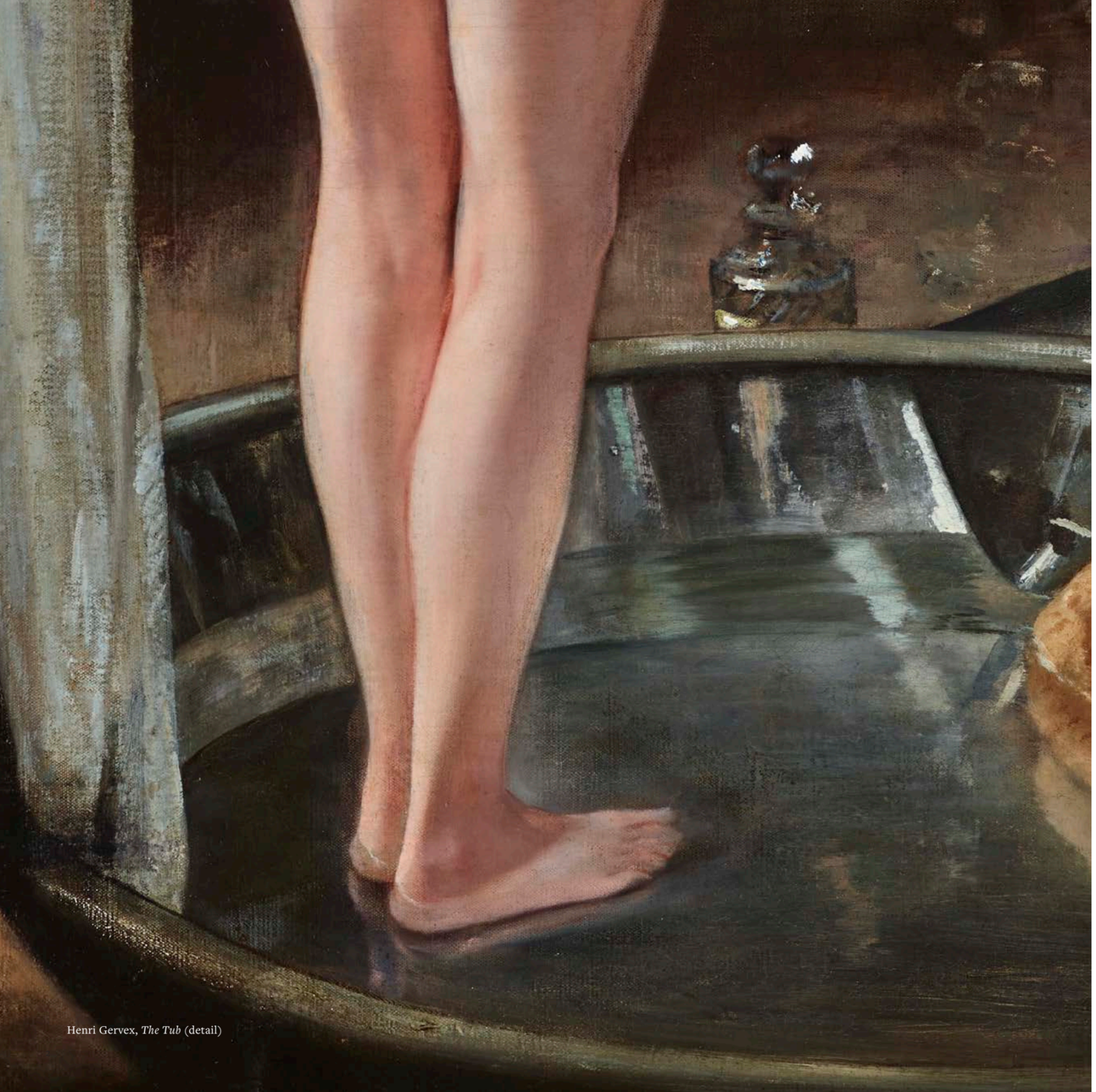
THE FRENCH FASHIONISTA



Gallery 19C

19



Henri Gervex, *The Tub* (detail)

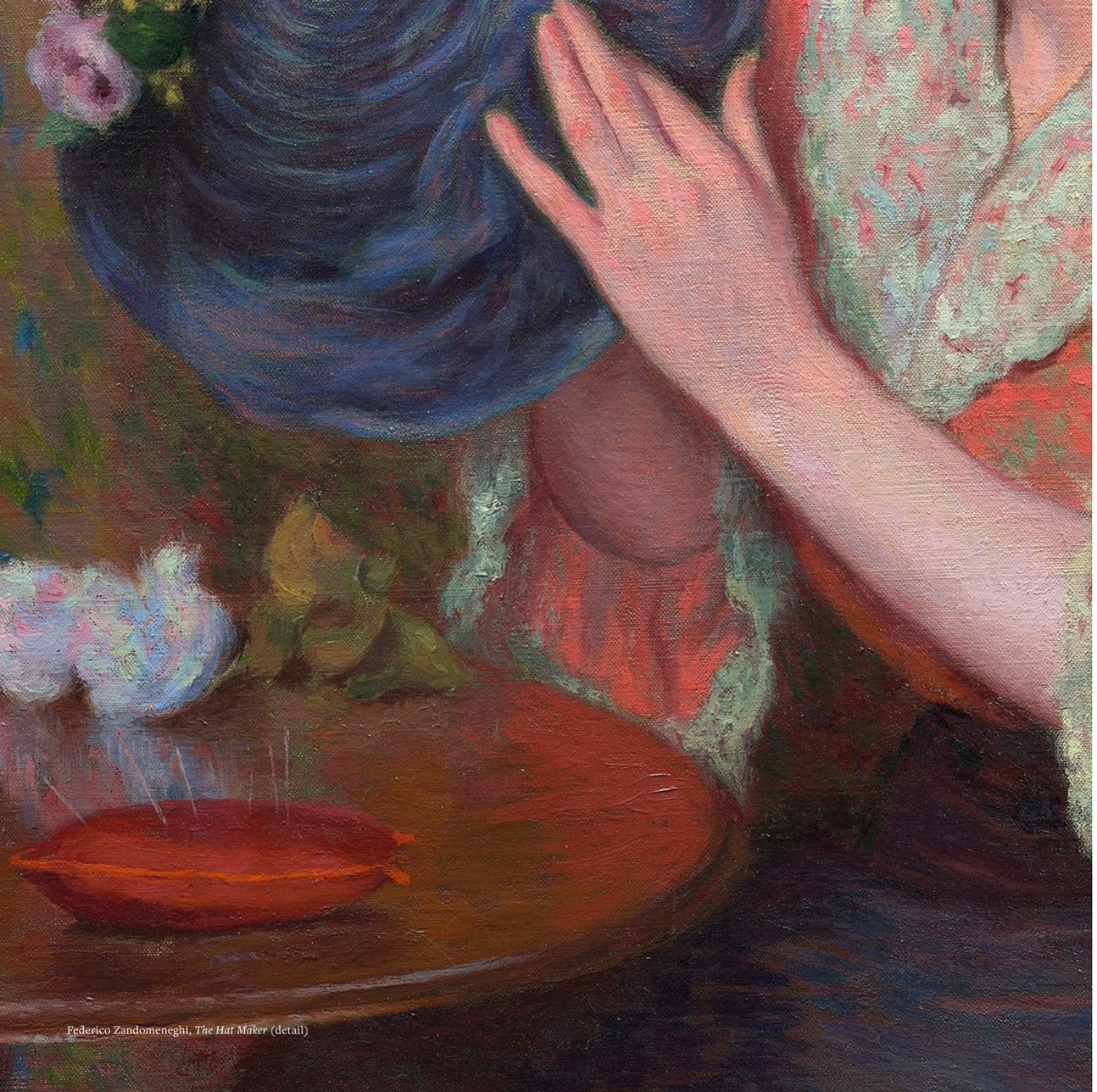
19

THE FRENCH FASHIONISTA

Dressing the Women
of Nineteenth-Century Paris

Gallery 19C

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Federico Zandomeneghi, *The Hat Maker* (detail)

INTRODUCTION

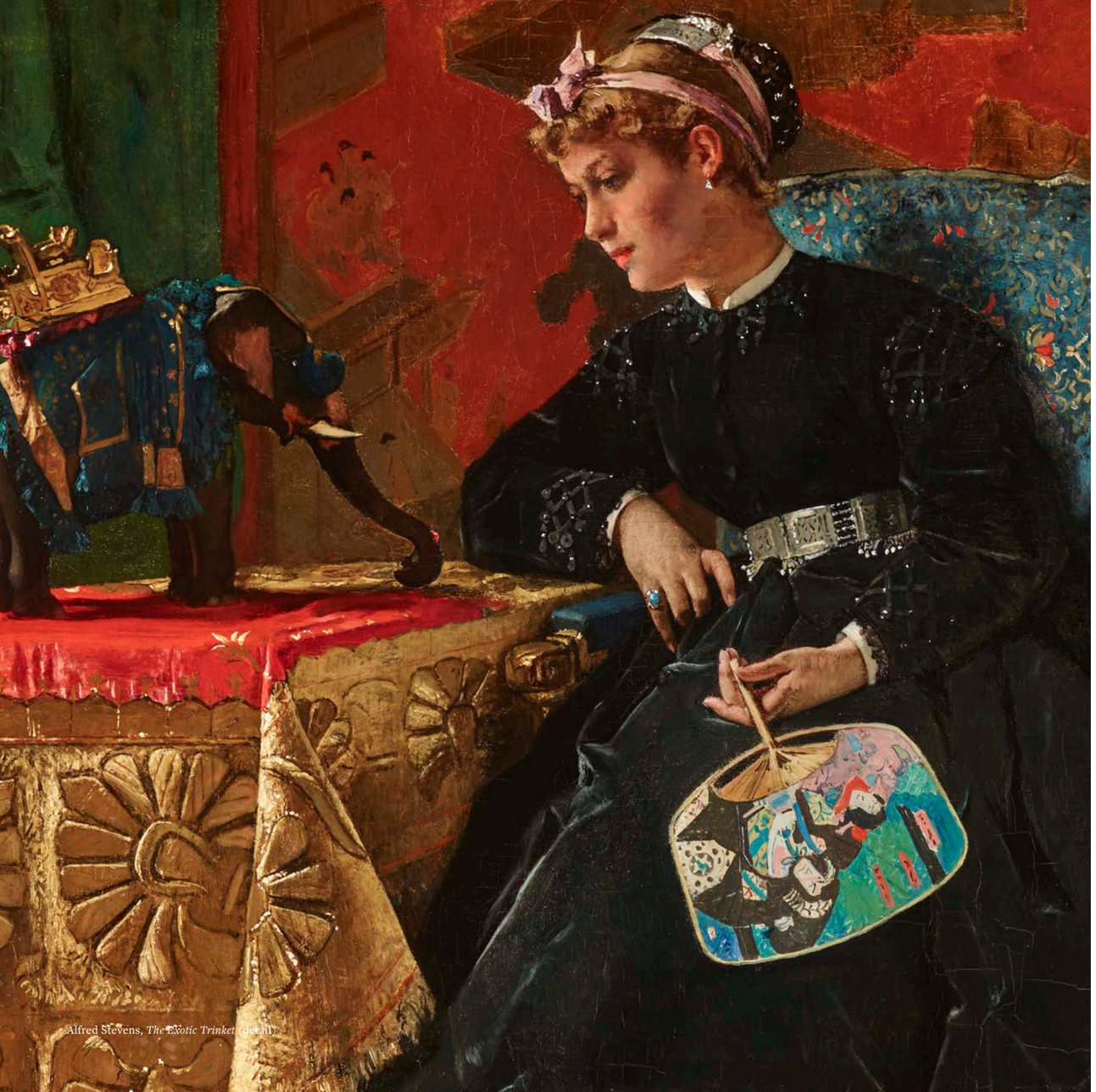
Our new exhibition, *The French Fashionista*: Dressing the Women of Nineteenth-Century Paris showcases how fashion played a central role in French painting in the second half of the nineteenth century. From delicate day dresses that appeared like fluffy white clouds to bejeweled and elaborately embellished evening gowns, the new fashions were manna to the artists of the period. Beautiful dresses, in a rainbow of colors and textures, provided a new and continuous source of artistic inspiration. In other words, what better way for an artist to display their virtuosity than in capturing the sumptuous textures of velvet and silk? The new Haussmannian Paris—the Paris we know today—with its wide boulevards and expansive parks, provided both the backdrop and catalyst for the splendid fashions on display during this period. What were the rapidly shifting styles and silhouettes of fashion? What did the daily wardrobe changes of a fashionable "Parisienne" involve, whether at home in Paris or on holiday? And where did French women shop?

We are honored that Dr. Justine De Young, a leading authority on French fashion and art and the author of *The Art of Parisian Chic: Modern Women and Modern Artists in Impressionist Paris* (2025) has contributed insightful essays to our catalogue and has graciously shared her expertise in support of our exhibition. Justine is also currently working on a long-overdue catalogue raisonné of the French painter Louise Abbéma and has identified the sitter in an Abbéma portrait included in the exhibition (cat. 1) as the celebrated actress Sarah Bernhardt.

We hope that the next time you admire a beautiful dress or a carefully crafted ensemble in a nineteenth-century painting, you will ask yourself: Where, when, how—and why?

Eric Weider

Polly Sartori



Alfred Stevens, *The Exotic Trinket* (detail)

ARTISTS

LOUISE ABBÉMA — 1
PAUL BAUDRY — 2
JEAN BÉRAUD — 3
ALBERT BESNARD — 4
GIOVANNI BOLDINI — 5
EUGÈNE BOUDIN — 6
PIERRE CARRIER-BELLEUSE — 7
CHARLES JOSHUA CHAPLIN — 8
ANDRÉ DEVAMBEZ — 9
HENRI GERVEX — 10
VICTOR GABRIEL GILBERT — 11
JOHAN BARTHOLD JONGKIND — 12
ERNEST-JOSEPH LAURENT — 13
JEAN-FRANÇOIS RAFFAËLLI — 14, 15
ALFRED SISLEY — 16
HENRY SOMM — 17, 18
ALFRED STEVENS — 19, 20
AUGUSTE TOULMOUCHE — 21, 22
FEDERICO ZANDOMENEGHI — 23, 24



PUBLIC GLANCES, PRIVATE THOUGHTS: THE MODERN WOMAN IN BELLE ÉPOQUE PARIS

JUSTINE DE YOUNG, PH.D.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, life was lived in public as never before. Under Emperor Napoléon III, Paris gained broad new boulevards, vast public parks, and glittering theaters. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the department store, fashion became widely accessible. The cheap steel crinoline cage, which liberated women from the many heavy petticoats used to support the bell-shaped skirts then popular, became the first fashion trend embraced by women of all classes. At the same time, the population of Paris rose to more than two million and an active omnibus system moved people around the city as never before. The ceaseless flow of crowds and carriages in modern Paris is vividly evoked in André Devambez's *Boulevard Montmartre by Night* (cat. 9) Paris felt new and strange. One could no longer know who someone was just by looking at them. To cope with this uncertainty, writers, artists, and the public relied on stereotypes about how different types of people dressed and acted.

These social types emerge clearly in Johan Barthold Jongkind's *Le Marché aux Fleurs, Boulevard Richard Lenoir, Paris* (1855) (cat. 12) which highlights the boulevard as a site of fashionable display. The woman in black, with her eye-catching red bonnet ribbons, dramatically lifts her skirts to reveal her white-stockings and petite feet. This was the typical gesture of the *cocotte* (extravagant mistress), which Jongkind contrasts with the seemingly respectable women behind her who leave their skirts brushing the ground.

Note all the glances toward the *cocotte*—observing strangers in public and guessing who they might be had become a popular entertainment. All of Paris had become a show.

Giovanni Boldini's *Paris Types: A Study of Two Women* (1878) (cat. 5) juxtaposes a working-class laundress with a chic *Parisienne*, who is likely also a *cocotte* given her made-up face, tiny waist, and the suggestion of a raised skirt. Boldini captures the frenetic atmosphere of the modern city, with clouds of steam from the railroad below obscuring the urban cityscape. Guidebooks warned foreign visitors about the number and variety of women seen on Parisian streets compared to other European capitals. We can see another example of this in Victor Gabriel Gilbert's *Un Marché Parisien* (1878) (cat. 11) which depicts a fashionable, veiled bourgeois mother and child walking at a neighborhood market alongside a housemaid shopping for her mistress. White-bonneted vegetable vendors, a red-capped soldier, new streetlights, and a Morris advertising column complete the scene.

Belle Époque artists also began to illustrate aspects of private life that were previously hidden, as seen in Henri Gervex's *The Tub* (cat. 10), which freezes a shapely redhead as she emerges from her bath, or Auguste Toulmouche's *Elegant Woman in an Interior* (1872) (cat. 21), which centers on a brunette in a blue satin and velvet dress awaiting a tardy visitor. Indeed, there was a growing interest in women's subjectivity and experiences. Alfred Stevens' *Le Salon du Peintre* (1880) (cat. 20) focuses on the woman dressed in

André Devambez, *Boulevard Montmartre by Night* (detail)



black entertaining her two fashionable friends in the early evening rather than the male artist evoked in the title. In Stevens' *The Exotic Bibelot* (cat. 19), a chic young woman holding a vibrant Japanese fan contemplates a miniature elephant sculpture in a room filled with imported textiles. Toulmouche's *The Serious Book* (1874) (cat. 22) takes women's ability to concentrate less seriously, depicting two women who have fallen asleep, apparently exhausted by the attempt to read a serious text. The women become just another beautiful ornament in a room filled with the exotic decorative objects then essential to a fashionable bourgeois interior.

By contrast, Jean Béraud's *Un Figaro de Rêve* (cat. 3) portrays a more critically engaged modern woman, emphasizing her interest in and connection to the city's news, even when away from it in the countryside. Federico Zandomeneghi in *The Artist's Studio* (cat. 23) also centers on a smartly dressed woman deep in thought, in this case quietly inspecting a sheet that she has pulled from a portfolio of prints or drawings. Zandomeneghi's *The Hat Maker* (cat. 24) shows a milliner concentrating intently on the creative task at hand, with greater attention to her individuality than one finds in similar scenes by his friend, the Impressionist Edgar Degas. An artist herself, Zandomeneghi's *modiste* actively manipulates the shape and drape of the blue hat to suit her desired aesthetic.

An artistically arranged bouquet (the work of a similarly creative *bouquetière*) catches our eye in Pierre Carrier-Belleuse's *Les Plaisirs de Paris* (1878) (cat. 7), directing our attention to a young woman seemingly saddened by the unwelcome advances of the cigar-smoking man in the foreground. In a poignant contrast, the poster behind her advertises *Les Plaisirs de Paris* (*The Pleasures of Paris*), a pocket guide to the city's most fashionable spots. The white *louée* (rented) sign and the red folded paper chickens—also called cocottes—on the poster strongly suggest that the young woman's future is to become a rich man's mistress, if she is not one already. The *haute bourgeois* woman seated next to her (perhaps her mother), with her lapdog and her wedding ring carefully displayed, further underscores the younger woman's isolation. She may be negotiating with the top-hatted gentleman next to her for her daughter's companionship—or she may be negotiating for herself. Writers at the time constantly lamented that modern mistresses dressed like wives and modern wives dressed like mistresses so much that you could never tell them apart. Note Carrier-Belleuse's emphasis not only on women's visibility, but also on their ability to look, from the older woman's pince-nez to the young *cocotte*'s turned away glance. The painting offers an unusually sympathetic window into the experience of women in the modern city that would later be echoed in Édouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882).

Albert Besnard is even more radical in his focus on a woman's subjectivity in *By Candlelight* (*Madeleine Lerolle in Profile*) (1885) (cat. 4). Besnard's avant-garde framing of the scene—reminiscent of the bold cropping of Degas—resists the decorative impulse of painters like Toulmouche. Instead, he restricts our view to Lerolle's head and shoulders and the massive sprigs of white rhododendrons and yellow mimosas being beautifully lit by the silver candelabra. The moody scene and compressed interior space prefigure later Nabis compositions by Pierre Bonnard. The viewer is confronted by what they cannot know: the private thoughts and emotions of another person. We are left to interpret surfaces in art just as we do in life, attempting to decipher the fleeting glimpses into the lives of the strangers we encounter as we navigate the modern city.

Federico Zandomeneghi, *The Artist's Studio* (detail)

1

Louise Abbéma

(FRENCH, 1853–1927)

PORTRAIT OF SARAH BERNHARDT, 1914
oil on board
13 5/8 by 9 5/8 in. (34.5 by 24.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Studio of the artist (and sold, her sale, Paris, 19 December 1927)
Private collection, Paris
Thence by descent
Hôtel des ventes du Pays de Caux, Bruno Roquigny, 11 June 2001
Private collection, France

CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ NOTE

We are grateful to Justine De Young for identifying, dating and situating this work, which will be included in her upcoming catalogue raisonné on Louise Abbéma.

Few artist-sitter relationships in nineteenth-century France were as sustained as that between Louise Abbéma and Sarah Bernhardt. From the 1870s onward Abbéma portrayed the actress again and again, in her public roles and in private moments, over decades of close companionship.

By the time Abbéma painted this portrait in 1914, Bernhardt was far more than a celebrated actress. She had fashioned herself into an international cultural phenomenon through theater, photography, fashion, publicity, and an extraordinarily sophisticated command of her own image. Appearance, for Bernhardt, was not simply decoration. Costume, portraiture, gesture, and dress all became tools through which she shaped the identity presented to the public.

This portrait therefore belongs to a visual relationship already nearly forty years old. Abbéma was not merely recording Bernhardt's appearance, but portraying a woman who had made appearance itself part of her art. In an exhibition concerned with fashion and the construction of feminine identity, Bernhardt offers an especially compelling example of how dress and self-presentation could become forms of authorship, interpreted here by an artist who had known and portrayed her for decades.



2

Paul Baudry

(FRENCH, 1828–1886)

PORTRAIT OF GUILLEMETTE DE LAREINTY, 1857
signed *B* and dated *1857* (right center); inscribed *GUILLEMETTE* (top center)
oil on canvas
18 1/2 by 13 3/4 in. (47 by 35 cm)

Paul Baudry's *Portrait of Guillemette de Lareinty* presents dress as an important part of youthful identity and social distinction. The daughter of a prosperous French family, and later the Marquise de Paris, Guillemette appears against a nearly bare background, allowing her clothing and expression to take center stage.

Her pale dress is animated by crisp black trimming and vivid blue bows, while a finely pleated white collar and ribbons woven through her hair complete a youthful but carefully composed appearance. For a girl of her social standing, dress was already part of an education in presentation. Quality of fabric, grooming, trimmings, and restraint could communicate family position before adulthood. Clothing was not simply decorative, but one of the ways status, taste, and identity were made visible.

Baudry's handling of the portrait is notably fresh. When it appeared at the Salon of 1859, critics admired its lively brushwork, and Charles Baudelaire compared Guillemette to the child portraits of Velázquez. Her ribbons and trimmings are carefully arranged, but the looseness of Baudry's brush gives the portrait a sense of immediacy that feels strikingly modern.

PROVENANCE

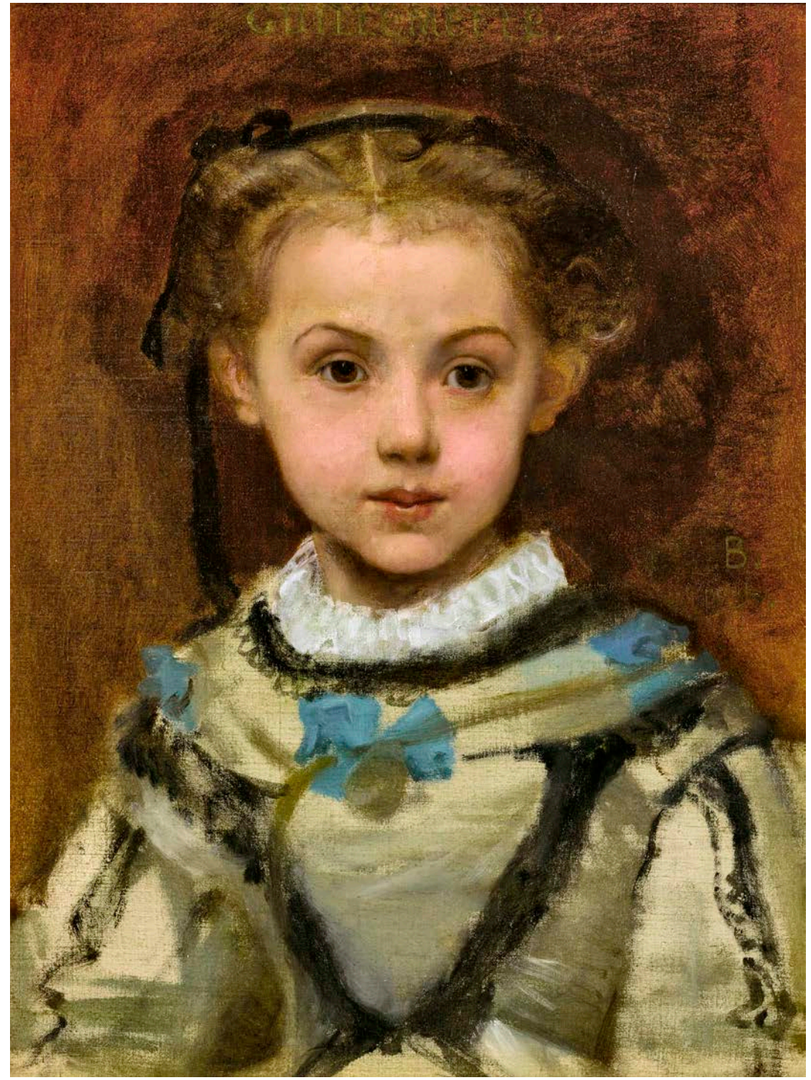
Mme la baronne de Lareinty (acquired directly from the artist)
Thence by descent (the sitter and until at least 1929)

EXHIBITED

Paris, *Salon*, 1859, no. 169 (*as Guillemette*)
Paris, École Nationale des Beaux-Arts, *Exposition au profit de l'Association des Artistes peintres, sculpteurs, etc., et du monument à élever à la mémoire de Paul Baudry,* 1886, no. 27 (lent by la baronne de Lareinty)
Paris, Grand Palais, *Paul Baudry au Salon des artistes français, 1929*, no. 3432 (lent by the sitter)

LITERATURE

Catalogue des œuvres de Paul Baudry: avec une étude par M. Eugène Guillaume, Paris, 1886, p. 30, no. 27
Charles Ephrussi, *Paul Baudry: sa vie et son œuvre,* Paris, 1887, p. 176, 317
Marcel Fouquier, *Profils et portraits: notes de littérature,* Paris, 1891, p. 294
Paul Baudry, 1828–1886: les portraits et les nus, exh. cat., Historial de la Vendée, Les Lucs-sur-Boulogne, October 26, 2007–February 3, 2008, p. 130



3

Jean Béraud

(FRENCH, 1849–1935)

THE FIGARO (UN FIGARO DE RÊVE), 1875–1880
signed *Jean Béraud* (lower left)
oil on canvas
25 1/2 by 21 1/2 in. (64.8 by 54.6 cm)

Jean Béraud made his reputation painting the spectacle of modern Paris: its boulevards, cafés, theaters, and fashionable crowds. *Un Figaro de Rêve* is therefore striking precisely because so much of that world is absent. His elegant Parisienne has left the city behind, yet Paris follows her. Beside her rests a copy of *Le Figaro*, the daily newspaper that connects this moment of rural solitude to the restless life of the capital.

Seen almost entirely from behind, she is identified less through physiognomy than through dress. For contemporary viewers accustomed to reading clothing as a language of class, taste, and modernity, her fitted silhouette and carefully composed toilette were enough to mark her as a Parisienne. Yet Béraud refuses to make her merely an object of display. She sits alone, apparently without a chaperone, absorbed not in being seen but in what she has read. The gesture subtly reverses the usual terms of the fashionable image: rather than simply inviting the viewer's gaze, this Parisienne is absorbed in a private world of thought.

PROVENANCE

G. von Bodem
M. Morel
Galerie Brame et Lorenceau, Paris, 1986
Noortman Gallery, Maastricht
Private Collection, Connecticut (acquired from the above in 1999)

EXHIBITED

Paris, Grand Palais, *XIIIe Biennale internationale des antiquaires,* 1986
Maastricht, *The European Fine Art Fair,* 1999 (Noortman Gallery)

LITERATURE

S. Haitay, "Un événement. La XIIIe Biennale des antiquaires,"
Le Figaro, September 20, 1986, p. 196, illustrated (black and white)
Patrick Offenstadt, *Jean Béraud 1849–1935, The Belle Époque, A Dream of Times Gone By, Catalogue Raisonné*, Köln, 1999, illustrated p. 235, no. 305 (color)
The Magazine Antiques, vol. 164, issue 1, July 2003,
illustrated inside front cover (color)



4

Albert Besnard

(FRENCH, 1849–1934)

BY CANDLELIGHT (MADELEINE LEROLLE IN PROFILE), 1885
signed and dated *Besnard 1885* (lower left)
oil on canvas
39 1/8 by 29 1/4 in. (99.5 by 74.2 cm)

In *By Candlelight*, Albert Besnard turns the fashionable female portrait into something more intimate and elusive. His sitter, Madeleine Lerolle, belonged to one of the most sophisticated artistic circles in late nineteenth-century Paris, yet Besnard avoids the clear display of costume and social setting typical of society portraiture. Madeleine appears in profile, her figure tightly cropped and partly absorbed by flowers, shadow, and candlelight.

Fashion still plays an important role, but Besnard treats it through color and atmosphere rather than precise description. The vivid red of Madeleine's dress becomes the strongest accent in the painting, set against white rhododendrons, yellow mimosa, dark foliage, and the cool light of the candelabra. Instead of carefully recording seams, trimmings, or the full silhouette of her gown, he lets the fabric dissolve into the surrounding color.

The bold cropping recalls Degas, while the compressed space and decorative arrangement of flowers anticipate the intimate interiors of Bonnard and the Nabis. Madeleine's clothing does less to describe her than to set a tone. Besnard surrounds his fashionable sitter with an eerie, unsettled mood, her appearance suggestive rather than easily read.

PROVENANCE

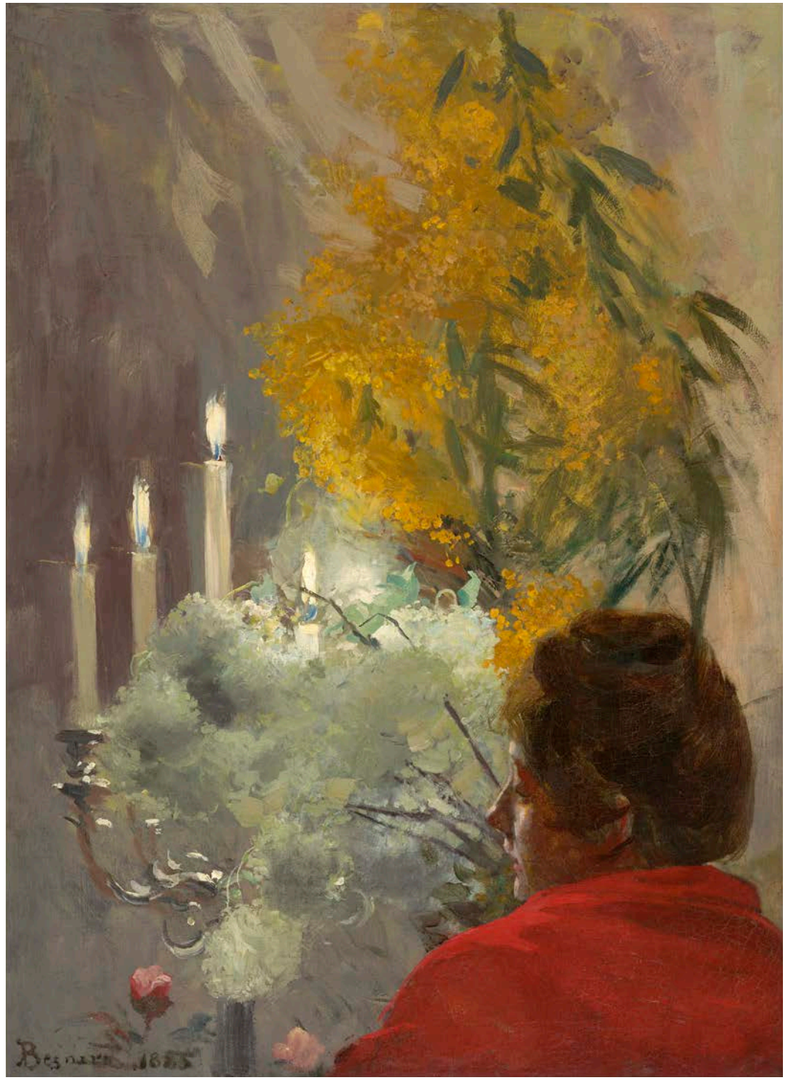
Private collection, France

EXHIBITED

Paris, Galerie Petit, Exposition internationale de peinture et de sculpture, 1885, as *À la lueur des bougies*
Paris, Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1890, as *À la lueur des bougies,* no. 66
Venice, Esposizione Internazionale d'arte della citta di Venezia, 1905 as *Al lume di candela,* no. 3, p. 50
Paris, Château de Bagatelle, Exposition de la Société nationale des beaux-arts, 1906, no. 20 as *Une femme*

LITERATURE

Théodore Véron, *Dictionnaire Véron, ou mémorial de l'art et des artistes de mon temps,* Poitiers, Bazin, 1885, p. 692
Léopold Mabilleau, "Le Salon du Champ de Mars," *Gazette des beaux-arts,* Vol. 3, 1 July 1890, p. 23
A. Ferney, "Au champ de Mars," *Journal des artistes,* no. 21, 1 June 1890, p. 1
L. de Fourcaud, "Exposition de la société nationale des beaux-arts," *Salon Illustré*, 1 September 1890, p. 4
"L'exposition de Bagatelle," *The New York Herald*, May 1906, p. 5
Ns, "À travers Paris," *Le Figaro*, 8 May 1906, p. 1
José Belon, "Au château de Bagatelle," *La Presse*, 12 May 1906, p. 1
Chantal Beauvalot, "L'image de la femme dans l'œuvre d'Albert Besnard, ou la sensation extrême de la vie," in Albert Besnard (1849–1934), Modernités Belle-Époque, Paris, Somogy, 2016, fig. 9, p. 39



5

Giovanni Boldini

(ITALIAN, 1842–1931)

PARIS TYPES: A STUDY OF TWO WOMEN, ca. 1878
oil on canvas
24 1/4 by 18 3/4 in. (61.6 by 47.6 cm)

Before Giovanni Boldini became the celebrated portraitist of international high society, he was fascinated by what one contemporary writer called the "febrile movement of the streets"—the restless crowds, traffic, and ceaseless motion of modern Paris. *Paris Types: A Study of Two Women*, painted around 1878, captures that early preoccupation through two very different female figures: a working-class laundress and a fashionable Parisienne.

Their distinction is made first through dress. One woman belongs visibly to the world of labor, carrying a heavy bundle of laundry across the city; the other embodies the carefully constructed appearance of fashionable urban femininity, with her fitted bodice, narrow waist, gloves, and elaborate hat. Boldini places these two women—one defined by work, the other by fashionable display—within the same rapidly changing modern environment.

Bridges, buildings, railways, and clouds of steam dissolve into the same rapid brushwork that shapes their bodies. The figures seem almost to merge with the city around them. Boldini does not simply catalogue two Parisian "types"; he uses dress, gesture, and movement to suggest how class, labor, and fashion shaped women's identities within the spectacle of modern Paris.

PROVENANCE

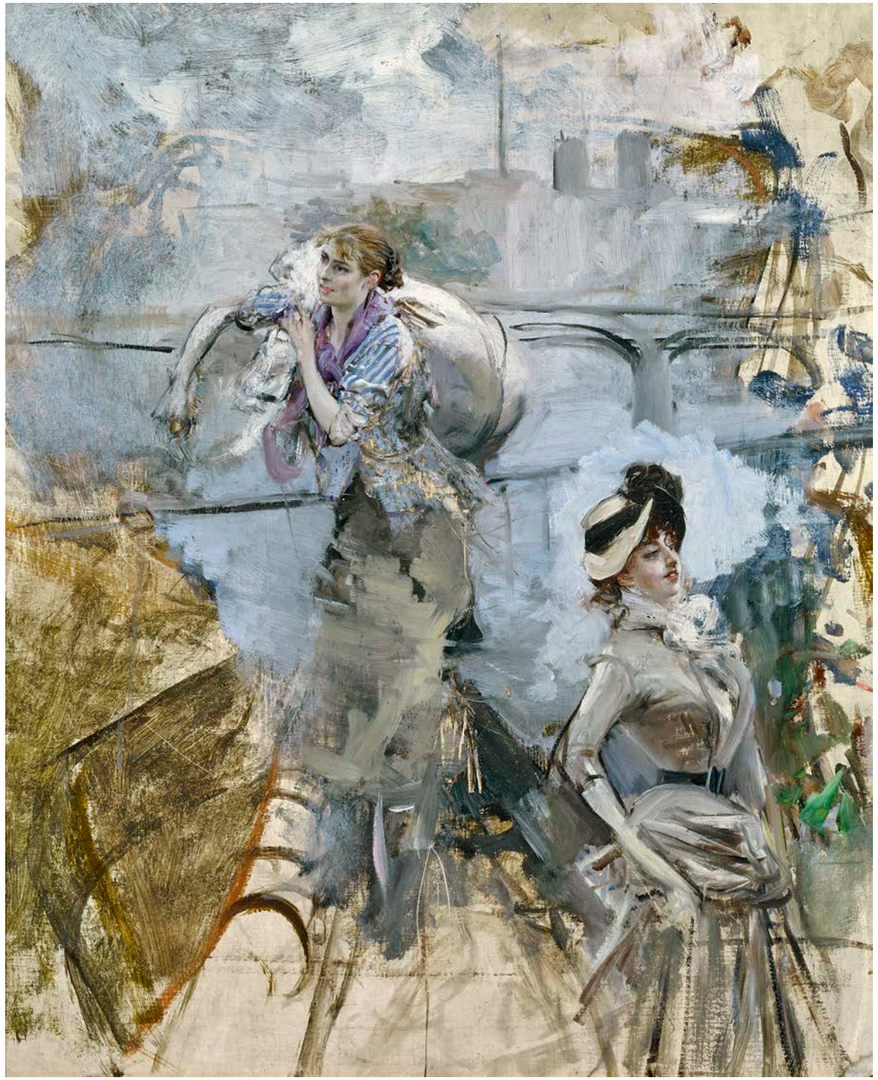
The artist's studio
Jacques Visseaux, Lyon (purchased at the 1936 exhibition)
Thence by descent

EXHIBITED

Paris, Galerie Charpentier, *Jean Boldini,* May 1931, no. 73
Paris, Galerie Charpentier, *Atelier Jean Boldini,* June 1936, no. 70
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, *Degas and the Laundress,* 8 October 2023–14 January 2024, no. 48, ill. p. 44, p. 166

LITERATURE

Emilia Cardona, *Lo Studio di Giovanni Boldini,* Milan, 1937, pl. X
Ettore Camesasca, *L'opera completa di Boldini,* Milan, 1970, p. 94, no. 34, illustrated
Piero and Francesca Dini, *Boldini : catalogo ragionato,* Volume III, Tome I, Turin, 2002, p. 128, no. 213, illustrated in full page, p. 127
Bianca Doria, *Giovanni Boldini : Catalogo generale dagli archivi Boldini,* Milan, 2000, no. 112, illustrated
Tiziano Panconi, *Giovanni Boldini : l'opera completa,* Florence, 2002, p. 192, illustrated





FROM BOUDOIR TO BOULEVARD: DRESSING THE PARISIAN DAY

AGNÈS PENOT, PH.D.

From Boudoir to Boulevard: Dressing the Parisian Day

As Arsène Houssaye, editor of *L'Artiste*, wrote in 1869, "Of all the women born in Paris, how many can truly be counted as Parisiennes? A woman has two births: the birth of the cradle, and the birth of the dress. It is at her first dress that one can say of a little girl: there is a Parisienne."[1] If a dress was what made the Parisienne, it was also what placed her. Her wardrobe was a finely graded language, codified to announce her rank and the hour alike, and an elegant Parisienne might change four to six times between waking and returning home at night, each toilette keyed to a precise moment of the day. This essay follows that daily choreography, tracing a woman's progress from the privacy of her bedroom to the public spectacle of the racecourse and the opera, taking the boundary between indoor and outdoor, private and public, concealment and display, as its guiding thread.

The private register: the body at ease

The Parisienne's day began not in dress but in undress (cat. 10). On a morning without obligations, she set aside the *saut-de-lit* that had carried her from bed and slipped into a *peignoir* while her hair was combed and dressed, the garment taking its very name from the French "peigner," to comb. Once she was ready to settle in for the morning, this gave way to a *robe d'intérieur*, the loose at-home gown. Cut for ease rather than structure, closing softly at the front and only lightly stayed, these first garments let the body rest, in deliberate contrast to the sculpted silhouette that public life demanded. This was the wardrobe of the boudoir, a room and a mood in equal measure. Here softness governed everything: the flowing lines of the garment, the hair worn down or loosely gathered. A woman *en robe d'intérieur* was, by definition, not yet dressed, and so not yet ready to be seen. It is precisely this ambiguity, between repose and exposure, comfort and the not-quite-decent, that gives the indoor toilette its fascination.

Nowhere is that exposure more open than in Manet's *Nana* (fig. 1). The young woman stands before her mirror only half undressed, while an elegantly dressed gentleman sits watching her. His presence is itself the transgression, for a respectable woman was never to be seen in this state by any man outside her family. To show a woman in this unfinished state was considered scandalous, and the painting was refused at the Salon of 1877. What the painting exposes is the ordinarily hidden architecture of dress: *Nana* is caught at the stage of underpinnings, the corset, *chemise*, and stockings over which the many layers of a finished toilette, petticoats, skirt, and bodice, would still have to be built. Yet for all that Nana is shown undressed, she is still laced in, and in that she was entirely ordinary. For the rest of her day, the Parisienne's body was indeed governed by the corset, a substitute for the natural body and beyond question the centerpiece of a woman's lingerie.

Auguste Toulmouche, *Elegant Woman in an Interior* (detail)



Fig. 1

Édouard Manet, *Nana*, oil on canvas, 1877, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hambourg

Whether one was a woman of the world or a peasant, to go without one was inconceivable, so much so that there were morning corsets and night corsets, winter corsets and summer corsets, ball corsets, bridal corsets, corsets for pregnancy, corsets for travel, and corsets for riding.

If the morning belonged to the self, the Parisienne's afternoon belonged to society, governed by the ritual of the "at home" day, the fixed hours when a lady made herself available to callers. When she went to pay her own calls, she set aside the *peignoir* of waking or *robe d'intérieur* for the *robe de visite* (cat. 22), which was elaborate and made of silk, trimmed with flounces and passementerie, yet never décolleté, for the calling ritual was public in spirit even as it passed from one private drawing room to another. When she received rather than went out, dress answered to the room itself. This impulse to coordinate the self with its setting found its fullest expression by the 1880s, when Octave Uzanne described a Parisienne for whom dress had become inseparable from the room in which it was worn (cat. 19). For receiving intimates at teatime, a different garment was possible. Introduced in the 1870s, the tea gown was a new kind of interior dress, worn above her loosened corset around the home, yet proper enough to receive close friends. However elaborate the tea gown, however carefully staged the afternoon "at home," these were the toilettes of a woman still within her own walls, dressed for a public that came to her. To cross the doorstep was to change registers entirely. The soft, unboned body of the interior had now to be laced, structured, and armored for the eyes of the street, for the tight corset returned and the silhouette hardened.



Fig. 2

The Picture Exhibition at the Salon, looking at Manet's Olympia, 1865, published in Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from the Revolution to the End of the XIXth Century*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd, illus. François Courboin, London, W. Heinemann, 1901, fig. 3 p. 20



Fig. 3

Racing at the Bois de Boulogne, 1862, published in Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from the Revolution to the End of the XIXth Century*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd, illus. François Courboin, London, W. Heinemann, 1901, fig. 18, p. 138

Out and about in the world

Beyond the door lay the public register, and with it a structured body made for the world and its spectacles. A respectable woman did not wander the streets or sit in a café alone, and in public her dress was scrutinized for what it revealed of her rank, and even of her virtue: whether she was a *cocotte*, a prostitute, or a woman of good standing.[2] (cat. 3) To step outside, a woman put on her dress over her *crinoline*, or *tournure* (see "The Parisienne and the Modern Silhouette," by Emily Mohan, in this catalogue), and over that a *visite*, a light mantle that imprisoned the upper arms and remained in vogue until 1890 (fig. 2). In winter she added fur-lined mantles, a cashmere shawl, and a muff for the hands, turning warmth itself into another occasion for elegance. Black ankle boots, *bottines*, remained correct in town, worn day and evening alike. Accessories completed the toilette and were themselves instruments of seduction, playing at once on concealment and display. The *bottines* were rarely seen, only guessed at beneath the hem; the *voilette* veiled the face and the gloves covered the hands, while the fan occupied them; the parasol shielded from the sun while hiding and revealing by turns. The hat (cat. 24), above all, was indispensable, for a woman's hair stayed covered in public and reserved for private life, and she did not go out without one.

If the boulevard asked her to guard the signs of her dress, the racecourse and the new leisure of the sporting grounds, inverted the rule entirely. Longchamp, Chantilly, and Auteuil were the open-air theaters of the Parisian Season (fig. 3). From the inauguration of the Hippodrome de Longchamp in 1857, race day was the supreme occasion to see and to be seen, a stage on which fashionable society displayed itself for all to admire from beneath lace parasols. From early morning the carriages of the elegant world proceeded along the Champs-Élysées toward the course, where crowds of every rank gathered and mingled. Manet, Degas, and Raffaëlli all captured its excitement. (cat. 15). The couturiers of the rue de la Paix and the Place Vendôme were quick to grasp that no runway could rival the racetrack. They sent out their own models, dressed in the latest creations to move among the crowd as living advertisements, so that the fashion houses might pilot their *nouvelle mode* before the most fashion-conscious audience in Europe.



Fig. 4
Eugène Boudin, *On the beach, Sunset,* oil on canvas, 1865, Metropolitan Museum of Art

The *toilette de courses* was conceived to be read at a distance and reproduced in the illustrated press: extravagant hats, parasols, and silhouettes calculated for the long sightlines of the paddock. Here private taste hardened into public reputation, and to appear in a gown from last season was a genuine social risk. At a moment when so much depended upon appearance, one needed to invest in articles of clothing in order to gain access to privileged spaces. The races also gave a stage to women who arrived unaccompanied, against the custom of the respectable classes. These were the *demi-mondaines*, celebrated figures who hovered at the fringes of polite society, of doubtful standing and, it was whispered, dubious morals, and who were often kept in the height of fashion by wealthy lovers. Dressed by the great houses, above all by Charles Worth, whose House of Worth turned couture into a booming industry, they became mannequins of a different order, their beauty and their toilettes advertising the couturier.

If the racecourse drew fashionable Paris just beyond the city, the railway carried it further still, all the way to the sea, transforming the Parisienne's relationship with the outdoors. From the 1850s a dense network linked the small ports of Normandy to Paris and a coast all but ignored a generation earlier, now filled with English and French aristocrats and the bourgeoisie. They came on their physicians' advice, in the age of thalassotherapy, when sea bathing was prescribed as a cure and salt water was credited with healing frail nerves and delicate health.[3] Each resort owed its fashion to Boudin or the Impressionists, yet the beach they made famous is one we would scarcely recognize. (fig. 4). Boudin's elegant crowds, come to the sand in full dress and long gowns, converse as in a drawing room and contemplate the sea. The beach had become a salon laid out upon the sand, one part of a whole apparatus of open-air leisure, walking, riding, boating, and the newly fashionable yachting, that gradually shifted the seaside from health toward sport.

The *toilette de bain* was a fashionable seaside ensemble, made to be seen on the sand rather than worn into the water, and Worth himself furnished a model for one in 1875.[4] The *costume de bain*, by contrast, was the functional garment of immersion, worn only for the brief, covered dip into the waves. The bather reached the sea in a *cabine de bain*, a wheeled cabin drawn down to the water by a horse so that she could change and enter unseen. Steal a glance inside, though, and the surprise is that she is not undressed at all but covered from head to toe. Under a cap tied over her hair she wears a dress stiffened at the hem so no stray gust can lift it, puffed drawers, dark stockings, a bathing robe, and even shoes. Propriety required bathers to keep their bodies to themselves, so a woman went into the sea fully dressed.

The ceremonial register: the ornamented body at its most public and most seen

Evening alone permitted the shoulders to be bared. Of all the day's toilettes, only the evening gown could be décolleté, and it came in two degrees. The dinner dress, or *toilette de petit soir*, opened the night in relative restraint, while the gown worn to the opera or the ball, the *toilette de grand soir*, was the most richly ornamented garment a woman would put on all day. The ball was the summit of formal display, above all for younger women, for whom the season's grand occasions were a stage in the fullest sense: the dancing dress with its elaborate train and trimmings gathered up the entire apparatus of fashionable life and carried it to its climax. If men wore sober, dark tones, their wives served as the colored signboards of their husbands' standing. The evening gown drew on the newly invented artificial dyes, which lent its silks a vivid, shimmering cast unavailable to earlier generations. Décolleté and sleeveless, the ball gown was loaded with passementerie, fringe, lace, ruching, pearls, and sequins, yet held to the good taste of a harmony of tones and their gradations. (fig. 5). By day a hat was obligatory; at night it gave way to the *parure de tête*, a dressing of flowers, combs, or ribbons set in hair. (cat. 21).

And so, the day closed where it had begun, at the body. The Parisienne had risen in the soft, unstructured ease of the *peignoir*, her shoulders covered and her waist unbound in the privacy of the boudoir. She ended it in the most public room of all, laced and jeweled and bare-shouldered beneath the chandeliers. Between those two moments lay the whole finely graded language this essay has followed, in which every garment named its hour, and dress itself was the choreography of a Parisian day.

1 Arsène Houssaye, "La Parisienne," *L'Artiste, Journal de la littérature et des beaux-arts*, 1 août 1869, p. 11.

2 Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 2, no. 3, 1985, pp. 37–46.

3 Alain Corbin, *Le Territoire du vide: l'Occident et le désir du rivage*, Paris, Aubier, 1988.

4 Bénédicte Jarrasse, "Paris 'aux bains de mer'. L'invention médiatique d'une mondanité balnéaire dans la revue *La Vie parisienne* (1863-1885)," *Sociopoétiques*, no.5, 2020 (online: http://revues msh.uca.fr/sociopoetiques/index.php?id=1149).



Fig. 5
Ball Gown by the House of Worth, ca. 1872, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Jean-François *Raffaëlli*, *Races in Jersey* (detail)

6

Eugène Boudin

(FRENCH, 1824–1898)

STUDY FOR CRINOLINES (ÉTUDES DE CRINOLINES), ca. 1865
pastel on paper
8 3/4 by 12 13/16 in. (22.2 by 32.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Gustave Cahen, Paris, Eugène Boudin's executor
Charles Masson, Paris (gifted by the above)
Thence by descent
Galerie Talabardon & Gautier, Paris, 2025 (acquired from the above)
Private collection, Dallas, Texas (acquired from the above)

CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ NOTE

This pastel will be included in the third supplement to the catalogue raisonné of the painted work of Eugène Boudin, currently in preparation by the Comité, under no. 4618

In Eugène Boudin's *Études de crinolines*, fashionable identity is conveyed less through individual features than through dress. Across the sheet, women appear in flashes of blue, pink, white, yellow, and red, recognized instead by hats, shawls, bodices, and above all by the immense bell-shaped skirts that give the work its title. Boudin reduces fashionable identity to its most immediate visual signal: silhouette.

Few silhouettes were more emblematic of the Second Empire. The steel-hooped crinoline, introduced in the 1850s as a lighter alternative to layers of petticoats, allowed skirts to expand to extraordinary dimensions. Industrial production also made the garment increasingly accessible, helping the crinoline become one of the most recognizable features of contemporary dress.

These rapid studies relate closely to Boudin's celebrated views of fashionable vacationers at Trouville and Deauville, destinations made increasingly accessible by railway travel. Urban society carried its fashions to the coast, turning beaches and promenades into new arenas of display. In this sheet, however, Boudin strips away even the beach. Clothing itself becomes the spectacle: a study of color, movement, and the unmistakable geometry of modern fashion.



7

Pierre Carrier-Belleuse

(FRENCH, 1851–1933)

THE PLEASURES OF PARIS (LES PLAISIRS DE PARIS), 1878
signed and dated *P. Carrier-Belleuse 1878* (lower left)
oil on canvas
19 3/4 by 25 3/4 in. (50 by 65.5 cm)

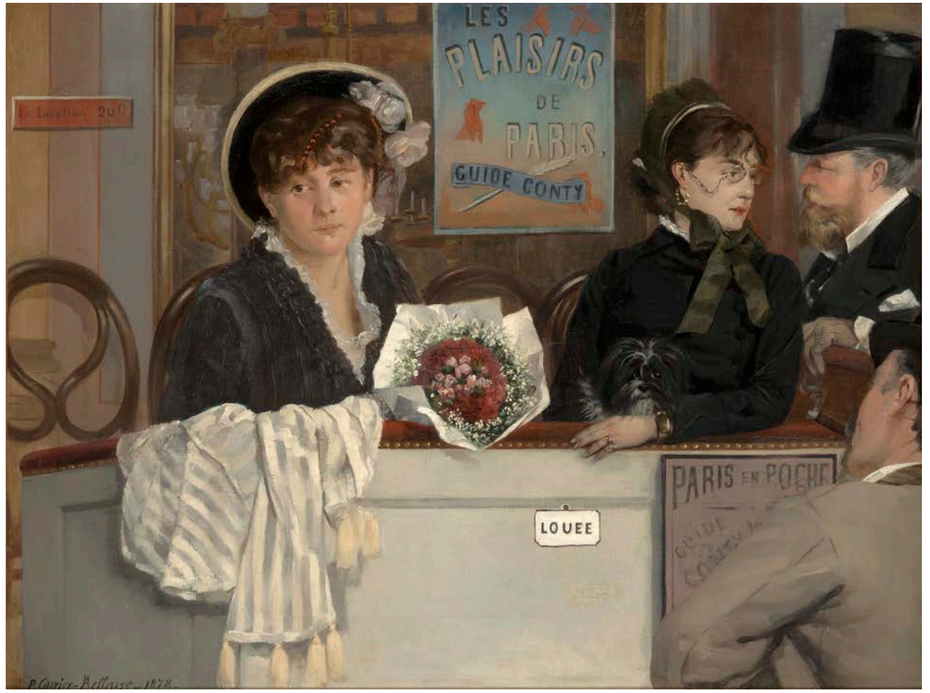
PROVENANCE

Paris, Galerie Hagnauer, October 1979
Sale: Christie's, Paris, 20 June 2007, lot 101
Private collection, Minneapolis (acquired at the above sale)

The title *Les Plaisirs de Paris* promises the pleasures of fashionable city life, but Pierre Carrier-Belleuse complicates that promise through a scene in which appearance is constantly being read and misread.

Set among spectators at the theater, the painting brings together dress, display, and social scrutiny. A young woman holding an elaborate bouquet turns away from the cigar-smoking man beside her, while an older woman, fashionably and respectably dressed, sits nearby with a lapdog and her wedding ring conspicuously visible. Behind them, an advertisement for Alfred Delvau's guide *Les Plaisirs de Paris* bears a white *louée*, or "rented," notice and red folded-paper cocottes, a word that also referred to fashionable mistresses.

For contemporary viewers, clothing could suggest class, respectability, and sexual identity, yet those categories were becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish. Writers repeatedly complained that wives and mistresses dressed so similarly that appearance no longer offered certainty. Carrier-Belleuse leaves the young woman similarly unresolved. Is her sidelong expression coy, uneasy, or melancholy? Is she a courtesan negotiating the attentions of the man beside her, or a respectable woman vulnerable to precisely that kind of misreading? The painting refuses to settle the question. Fashion becomes both a means of self-presentation and an unstable social language, rich in suggestion but no longer capable of guaranteeing social identity.



8

Charles Joshua Chaplin

(FRENCH, 1825–1891)

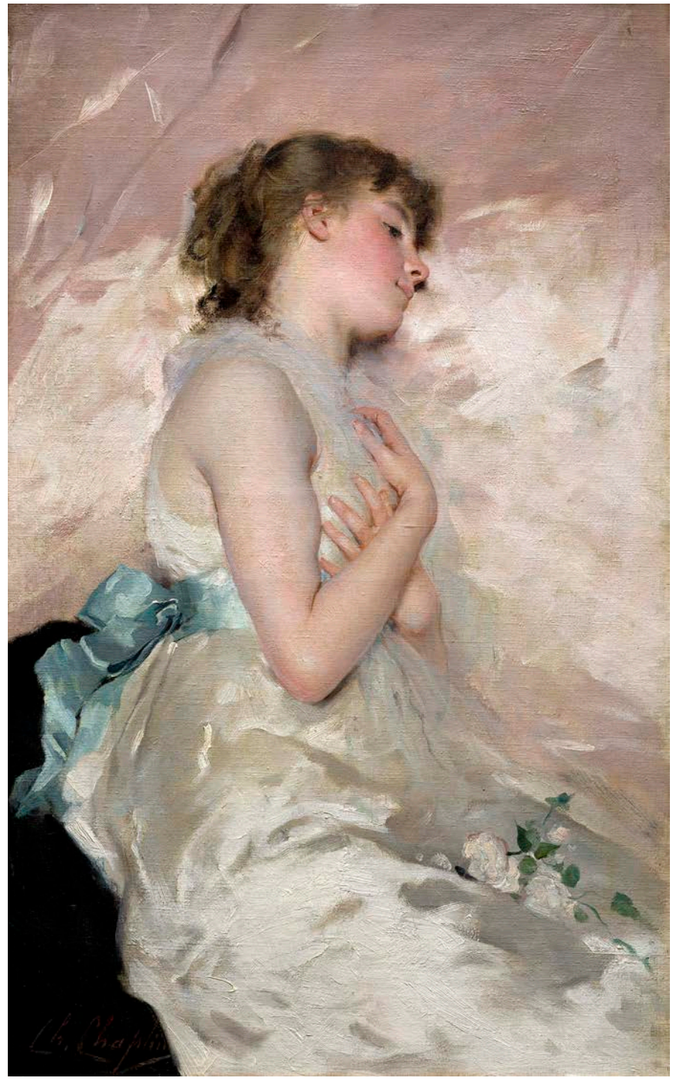
BEAUTY, ca. 1880
signed *CH. Chaplin* (lower left)
oil on canvas
26 by 16 1/2 in. (66 by 41.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Bernheim-Jeune fils, Paris, after 1906
Private collection, Argentina
Thence by descent

Charles Joshua Chaplin built an enormously successful career around images such as *Beauty*: intimate, exquisitely painted visions of feminine grace that translated the sensuality of eighteenth-century French painting into the fashionable world of the nineteenth century. Trained at the École des Beaux-Arts, Chaplin looked particularly to François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, adopting their soft palette, delicate modelling, and taste for elegant femininity.

Here, however, the effect depends upon restraint. The young woman turns into profile, lowers her head, and clasps her hands against her chest. Nothing announces a specific narrative. Instead, Chaplin asks the viewer to linger over the softness of fabric, the ribbon at her dress, the exposed curve of the neck, and the reverie suggested by her pose. Fashion contributes to setting the mood. *Beauty* is more than a display of fashionable elegance. Chaplin deliberately suspends his sitter between portrait and ideal, between the contemporary woman and the timeless feminine type. Her dress belongs to the nineteenth century; the dreamlike world she inhabits seems designed to escape it.



9

André Devambez

(FRENCH, 1867–1944)

BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE BY NIGHT, ca. 1902
signed *André Devambez* twice (lower left)
oil on canvas
14 by 17 3/4 in. (35.6 by 45.1 cm)

EXHIBITED

Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts; Paris, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, *André Devambez* (1867–1944), Vertiges de l'imagination, 2022, no. 72

Seen from high above, André Devambez's *Boulevard Montmartre by Night* turns Paris into a glittering living organism. Carriages, omnibuses, and pedestrians flow beneath illuminated windows and signs, while the steep viewpoint compresses individual figures into the larger rhythm of the street. Devambez does not describe the boulevard one person at a time; he paints the sensation of being confronted by the modern city all at once.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the grand boulevards created through Haussmann's transformation of Paris had become theaters of consumption and display. Shops, cafés, restaurants, transportation, entertainment, and crowds converged there, turning the street into a runway. Contemporary observers described Parisian boulevards as a parade of dazzling shop windows and equally dazzling costumes.

No single Parisienne dominates Devambez's view. That is precisely the point. This is the environment that made her possible: a city built on hustle and bustle, visibility, novelty, and the constant encounter with strangers. The fashionable women represented elsewhere in the exhibition occupied its interiors, shops, theaters, and gardens; here we see the immense illuminated stage across which they moved.



10

Henri Gervex

(FRENCH, 1852–1929)

THE TUB, 1888
signed *H. Gervex* (lower left)
oil on canvas
51 1/2 by 31 3/4 in. (131 by 80.5 cm)

Before the Parisienne could enter the boulevard, the theater, or the drawing room, there was the private ritual of the *toilette*—a term that referred both to the process of bathing, grooming, and dressing and to the finished ensemble itself. Henri Gervex takes that hidden interval as the subject of *The Tub*. A young woman stands in a zinc bathing basin while a maid waits with a white robe; a sponge and bottle of perfumed bath oil complete the scene. The nude body is rendered with the polished finish of Gervex's Academic technique, while the maid and surrounding interior are treated more freely, revealing the artist's engagement with Degas and the new painting of modern life.

The model has been plausibly identified as Valtesse de la Bigne, Gervex's former mistress and one of the most celebrated courtesans of nineteenth-century Paris. Renowned for her beauty, red hair, luxurious lifestyle, and carefully cultivated appearance, she inhabited a world in which fashionable self-presentation carried extraordinary social power.

That possibility gives the painting its particular tension. Clothing is almost entirely absent, yet fashion hovers just outside the scene. The white robe in the maid's hands marks the beginning of a transformation. Gervex catches the Parisienne before the public image has been assembled—at the intimate moment between the private body and the fashionable self.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, New York

EXHIBITED

Paris, Salon, 1888, no. 1114

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FASHIONING CHANGE: THE PARISIENNE AND THE MODERN SILHOUETTE

EMILY MOHAN

To be fashionable in nineteenth-century Paris was, almost by definition, to change. The fashionable woman of the 1860s occupied considerably more physical space than her counterpart of the late 1870s; within another decade, her outline had been altered again. Shapes disappeared only to return in modified form, while proportions that had seemed indispensable to a fashionable figure could become conspicuously outdated within a few years. The pace of change made fashion increasingly difficult to stabilize or define. The Parisienne remained recognizable, but the silhouette through which she was recognized did not.

Yet fashion depended upon novelty and recognition at once: a new silhouette had to be different enough to appear current, and familiar enough to be understood as fashionable. A silhouette did not have to be universally admired to become culturally powerful. It had to be recognized. Fashion plates, illustrated journals, caricatures, and paintings of contemporary women made these distinctions visible. They did more than advertise particular dresses. Collectively, they trained the eye to recognize changes in proportion—to see when a skirt had become too wide, when fullness had shifted backward, or when the balance of the fashionable figure had altered again. Silhouette became one of the most immediate ways of locating the Parisienne in the present.

Contemporary writers were themselves remarkably conscious of this unstable geometry. In 1875, the critic and aesthetician Charles Blanc argued that despite the "innumerable varieties" of dress, its beauty remained subject to three enduring principles: "order, proportion, and harmony."[1] Blanc sought fixed principles within a system that was constantly changing. His effort to impose order on fashion reflected a wider attempt to make rapid change intelligible: to identify rules and categories through which modern life could be understood. Every alteration in proportion made social and cultural change visible, even as contemporaries struggled to explain what those changes meant.

Artists confronted this mutable figure as well. Dress could place a woman unmistakably in the present and suggest class, occupation, or respectability, yet those signs were becoming increasingly difficult to trust. Contemporary observers were alert to the resulting uncertainty: by the 1870s, writers could joke about the difficulty of distinguishing a grand duchess from an ordinary duchess by appearance alone, and, as Justine De Young has argued, traditional social "types" became an increasingly ineffective means of interpreting the anonymous population of modern Paris.[2] The women gathered in *The French Fashionista* occupy precisely this tension between recognition and ambiguity.

Eugène Boudin, *Study for Crinolines* (detail)



Fig. 1

Le règne de la crinoline. Lithograph. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Collection de Vinck, vol. 157

Their dress situates them unmistakably within the visual culture of nineteenth-century Paris while revealing far less securely who they were. A woman might be immediately legible as *à la mode* while remaining socially elusive; her clothing could suggest wealth without proving it, refinement without guaranteeing rank, or respectability without disclosing the circumstances of her life. Fashion did not simply reveal identity; it could help construct, disguise, or perform it. For artists concerned with modern Paris, the fashionable silhouette was therefore more than a record of contemporary dress. It became a way of asking how much could really be known about a woman from her appearance.

Few fashions made that contradiction more visible than the crinoline. Introduced in its steel-hooped form during the 1850s, it allowed skirts to expand to dimensions previously sustained by layers of heavy petticoats. A closely fitted bodice met an enormous bell-shaped skirt, producing an emphatic contrast between the narrow waist and the circumference below. Industrial manufacture helped make the structure increasingly accessible by the 1860s.[3]

Eugène Boudin understood how little information was required to make the crinoline legible. In *Études de crinolines* (cat. 6), faces dissolve into rapid strokes while skirts swell outward in flashes of blue, pink, white, yellow, and red. The women are barely individualized, yet their hats, bodices, shawls, and immense skirts identify them immediately as fashionable figures of the Second Empire. The same proportions appear with greater precision in an 1860 fashion plate from the *Journal des Demoiselles* (fig. 3), where fitted bodices rise above skirts spreading broadly and almost symmetrically from the waist. One image presents the fashionable ideal; the other reduces it to color, movement, and shape.

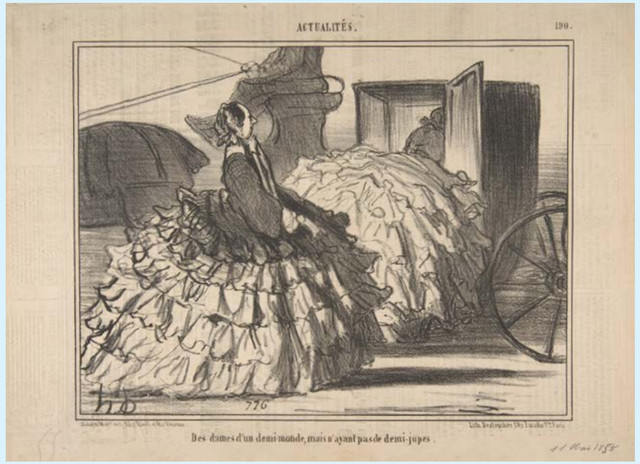


Fig. 2

Honoré Daumier, *Des dames d'un demi-monde, mais n'ayant pas de demi-jupes,* from *Actualités*, published in Le Charivari, May 11, 1855. Lithograph. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Caricaturists seized on precisely this recognizability. In *Le règne de la crinoline* (fig. 1), skirts become nearly architectural, overwhelming furniture, doorways, and other bodies. Daumier's *Des dames d'un demi-monde, mais n'ayant pas de demi-jupes* (fig. 2) sharpens the satire. Its women belong to the *demimonde*, a social world in which fashionable courtesans could be among the most daring adopters of new styles. Demimondaines were said to risk ridicule in order to introduce fashions in public, where conspicuous dress served precisely to attract attention.[4] Their innovations could then be adopted elsewhere, making the visual boundaries between fashionable courtesan and respectable woman increasingly difficult to maintain.

The satire therefore depends upon more than the absurd size of the skirts. Like other contemporary caricaturists, Daumier seizes upon the most excessive version of the prevailing mode, exaggerating a fashionable code his audience already knew how to read. Fashion plate and caricature appear to perform opposite functions—one proposes an ideal while the other pushes it toward absurdity—but both depend upon the same visual literacy. The exaggeration worked because the silhouette was already recognized.

And almost as soon as the crinoline had become unmistakable, fashion began to dismantle it.

By the late 1860s and early 1870s, circumference was giving way to a different distribution of volume. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 abruptly interrupted the conspicuous luxury of the Second Empire, as mourning, economic uncertainty, and patriotic restraint encouraged darker colors, reduced ornament, and a temporary sobriety in dress. Octave Uzanne later described the period as one in which "extreme richness of attire was quite forsworn," even noting a brief leveling of appearance across social classes. In the years immediately following the war, the crinoline gave way to what he called an "almost Japanese simplicity of line": skirts fell more closely to the body, their fronts flattened, and their forms appeared comparatively natural and restrained.[5]



Fig. 3

Adolphe Portier, *Journal des Demoiselles*, c. 1860. Hand-colored engraving. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-2009-3462



Fig. 4

A. Bodin, after Jules David, *Toilettes de Mme Morison*, from *Le Moniteur de la Mode*, no. 1348, 1876. Hand-colored engraving. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-2009-3650

Uzanne associated this new simplicity with the broader artistic climate of the period, including Impressionism and its preference for immediacy and apparent ease. Fashionable display soon returned, but in altered proportions. Fullness gathered behind the figure, trains lengthened, and the waist appeared increasingly elongated. What had been width became projection.

The change is visible in the exhibition itself. In Auguste Toulmouche's *Elegant Woman in an Interior* (cat. 21) of 1872, the deep sapphire gown retains the material richness associated with the Second Empire, yet its fullness has already begun to migrate toward the rear in the developing *tournure*. By 1875, Raffaëlli's *Elegant Lady in a Garden* (cat. 14) makes that redistribution more explicit: the skirt falls comparatively flat at the front while drapery gathers behind the figure, sharpening the distinction between the earlier crinoline and the new rearward silhouette.

The transformation becomes even clearer when the broad circumference of the 1860 *Journal des Demoiselles* fashion plate is set against an 1876 plate from *Le Moniteur de la Mode* (fig. 4). Bows, pleats, ruffles, and trains pull the eye insistently backward, while one figure turns partly away so that the profile of her dress reveals its construction. The redistribution of volume changed not only the silhouette itself, but the viewpoint from which it could most clearly be understood.

By the early 1880s, women's fashion had recovered much of its former richness without returning to the enormous circumference of the Second Empire crinoline. Instead, elaboration was concentrated elsewhere—through surface detail, complex construction, and an increasingly emphatic rear profile. As one contemporary account observed, "Art began to mingle with fashion,"[6] a phrase that captures the growing attention paid not only to silhouette but also to the refinement of its individual parts.

That shift became more pronounced when the bustle returned in the early 1880s. It was no longer the relatively soft, high-waisted *pouf* associated with the late 1860s and early 1870s. The new structure was harder, more angular, and often supported by a wire cage, its rear projection emphasized by fitted bodices, high necklines, tight sleeves, and heavier fabrics. It followed the narrow, trailing "fishtail" gowns of the preceding years, whose tightly drawn skirts could make walking cumbersome. The newer skirts were generally shorter and wider, and the disappearance of long daytime trains allowed greater freedom of movement even as the bustle itself reached increasingly exaggerated dimensions.[7]

The revival of the bustle has often been associated with Charles Frederick Worth, who was credited with helping to restore the form at the beginning of the 1880s. Contemporary commentary also linked its return to the French silk industry, particularly the manufacturers of Lyon. Whether or not Worth deliberately revived the bustle for commercial reasons, the association points to a larger truth about nineteenth-century fashion: changes in silhouette were inseparable from the industries that supplied them. Uzanne describes a rapidly expanding market in the 1870s, with growing demand for Lyon silk, Saint-Étienne ribbon, Tarare muslin, and textiles from Roubaix, Rouen, and Paris, while fabrics and millinery changed with remarkable frequency. Fashion's continual renewal was therefore not only aesthetic; it sustained an economy built upon novelty, consumption, and replacement.[8]

The bustle also changed the way fashion was pictured. As it grew more pronounced, fashion plates increasingly emphasized the profile because the side view revealed the most about its construction. Caricaturists adopted the

same viewpoint, exaggerating its projection into forms sometimes nicknamed *strapontins*, after folding seats.[9] Once again, idealization and exaggeration depended upon the same visual code. The silhouette had changed enough that it demanded to be seen differently.

This desire to impose order upon fashion extended beyond Blanc. Fashion writers searched for principles that might outlast the rapid fluctuations of seasonal style, proposing "truths," rules, and diagrams capable of making the changing *toilette* intelligible. In 1882, *L'Art et la Mode* reported on a lecture by Professor Catallucci devoted to "the art of dressing women and geometry," in which he drew a female figure overlaid with triangles, squares, and other geometric forms to demonstrate the proportional relationships between different parts of the body.[10] The episode was presented with a degree of mock seriousness, but Catallucci's impulse was hardly unique. Charles Blanc had similarly attempted to reduce dress to enduring aesthetic principles of order, proportion, and harmony. Together, such efforts reveal a persistent desire to impose regularity upon a system defined by continual change. The silhouette itself provided a kind of visual order, reducing fashion's endless variations to changes in proportion, balance, and line that could be recognized at a glance.

That need became more urgent as fashion increasingly celebrated novelty for its own sake. By the late Second Empire, fashionable dress could approach the very edge of caricature, with distinction often depending upon the unusual, exaggerated, or improbable. The illustrated press accelerated this process by circulating new styles with increasing speed and precision, allowing even subtle shifts in silhouette to become immediately visible.[11] Yet even the most exaggerated silhouette retained an internal logic of proportion: how far a skirt projected, where volume gathered, how tightly the waist was drawn, or how the upper and lower body were made to balance one another.

The language used to describe dress could therefore oscillate between poetry and discipline. Hippolyte Taine famously compared the perfect *toilette* to a poem,[12] emphasizing the refined orchestration of color, texture, and detail through which fashionable appearance was composed. Blanc, by contrast, imagined the beautiful woman enclosed within an "invisible trelliswork" of horizontal and vertical lines, "like a bird in its cage."[13] The two images are not as contradictory as they first appear. Fashion could seem expressive, inventive, even poetic, while depending upon carefully regulated structures that shaped the body with remarkable precision. The cage itself simply changed form.

By the late 1870s and 1880s, however, the circumstances in which women wore these clothes were changing as well. Women were becoming increasingly visible in the public and semi-public spaces of modern life and participating more actively in pursuits such as riding, boating, tennis, fencing, and, somewhat later, bicycling. This did not amount to unrestricted independence, but it did mark an important expansion of female mobility and physical activity. Dress began to respond accordingly. More streamlined ensembles and the developing tailored suit offered alternatives to the elaborate dresses of earlier decades, with fitted jackets, restrained ornament, and cleaner vertical lines better suited to movement. The fashionable woman of the 1880s was not only dressed differently from her predecessor; she moved through the modern city differently as well.[14]



Jean-François Raffaëlli, *Elegant Lady in a Garden* (detail)

Henry Somm, *At the Puppet Seller* (detail)

Henry Somm's *At the Puppet Seller* (cat. 17), dating to circa 1880, captures the fashionable body at precisely this moment. Its Parisienne wears a closely fitted pink bodice above an elaborately draped skirt and train, the narrow line reflecting the temporary retreat of the pronounced *tournure*. She looks, compares, chooses, and holds a puppet in her hand. The boutiques and department stores of modern Paris offered women new spaces in which they could participate actively in consumer life,[15] and Somm turns that freedom into a joke about control: the fashionable woman who might ordinarily be subjected to scrutiny is instead the one holding the strings.

The changing silhouette also altered how women could be read within modern life. In Federico Zandomeneghi's *The Artist's Studio* (cat. 23), the woman's dark, closely fitted *costume tailleur* places her unmistakably within the fashionable present, yet her absorbed examination of a portfolio gives her an agency that exceeds appearance alone: she is a woman looking rather than simply a woman looked at. Pierre Carrier-Belleuse's *Les Plaisirs de Paris* (cat. 7) exposes the opposite problem. Its central figure is carefully dressed and socially visible, yet her clothing does not securely identify her as a respectable woman, courtesan, or something in between. Together, the works show how dress could locate a woman within the fashionable present without securely fixing her social identity.



Fig. 5

Monogrammist JC, *Société Générale des Journaux Professionnels des Couturières, Exposition Universelle, 1889, No. 1502 16 95*, 1895. Hand-colored engraving. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-2009-1634

By the 1890s, fashion redrew the body once more. The bustle receded and skirts became comparatively controlled, but volume did not disappear. It migrated upward. In an 1895 fashion plate published by the *Société Générale des Journaux Professionnels des Couturières* (fig. 5), enormous *gigot*, or leg-of-mutton, sleeves swell from the shoulders before narrowing sharply toward the wrist. Placed beside the *Journal des Demoiselles* plate of the 1860s, the difference is startling: the visual weight once concentrated across the lower half of the body now sits above it.

Even this apparently new silhouette had a past. The *gigot* revived a form fashionable in the 1830s, enlarged and recombined with the proportions of another moment.[16] Its return formed part of a broader late-century culture of historicism, in which dressmakers repeatedly drew upon and reworked forms from earlier periods. Fashion was cyclical, but never simply repetitive: an old shape could become modern again through changes in scale, material, proportion, and context. Revival was therefore another form of fashionable change, transforming familiar shapes into something recognizably current.

That continual transformation helps explain the importance of silhouette to the Parisiennes gathered in this exhibition. Their clothes do not simply document changing fashions; they shape how these women occupy space, move through the city, and are interpreted by others.

These contradictions belonged to the experience of modern Paris itself. The city offered women expanding opportunities for consumption, leisure, cultural participation, and public visibility, but greater visibility also brought increased scrutiny and the possibility of misreading. Structured daytime dress, in particular, could signal modernity and increased mobility while also functioning as a kind of social armor: a polished, disciplined exterior suited to the freedoms and uncertainties of public life.[17] Like the writers who searched for enduring principles beneath fashion's continual change, artists used the dressed body to impose a sense of order on—and sometimes test—the uncertainties of modern urban life.

There was therefore no single silhouette of the nineteenth-century Parisian woman, nor would a fixed one have suited her for long. What persisted was the expectation of change. The same fashions that disciplined the body could also facilitate new forms of movement, visibility, and self-presentation; the same silhouettes that identified women as recognizable social types could make their individual identities more difficult to secure. That artists returned so insistently to fashionable dress reflects more than a desire to record contemporary life. Silhouette gave form to these contradictions: order and instability, visibility and protection, conformity and self-fashioning. To remain *à la mode* was to inhabit a present continually on the verge of becoming the past; to paint the fashionable woman was to capture that instability before her outline changed again. In the works gathered here, silhouette becomes more than the record of a dress. It becomes one of the forms through which modern life itself could be understood.

1 Charles Blanc, quoted in Helen Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 267–68.

2 Justine De Young, *The Art of Parisian Chic: Modern Women and Modern Artists in Impressionist Paris* (Bloomsbury, 2025), chap. 1.

3 Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from 1797 to 1897*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd (London: William Heinemann; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 128–32.

4 Helen Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 265–66.

5 Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from 1797 to 1897*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd (London: William Heinemann; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 150, 153–54.

6 Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from 1797 to 1897*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd (London: William Heinemann; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 155.

7 Helen Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 265.

8 Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," 263–65; Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris*, 157.

9 Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," 264.

10 Helen Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 267–68.

11 Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from 1797 to 1897*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd (London: William Heinemann; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 135–37.

12 Hippolyte Taine, *Notes sur Paris: Vie et opinions de M. Frédéric-Thomas Graindorge* (Paris: Hachette, 1867), 27; English trans., *Notes on Paris* (New York: Henry Holt, 1888), 24–25, quoted in Gary Tinterow, "The Rise and Role of Fashion in French Nineteenth-Century Painting," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012).

13 Charles Blanc, *L'Art dans la parure et dans le vêtement* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1877), ii, quoted in Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," 253.

14 Helen Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 253; Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from 1797 to 1897*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd (London: William Heinemann; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 161–63.

15 Françoise Tétart-Vittu, "Shops versus Department Stores," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 209–17.

16 Octave Uzanne, *Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from 1797 to 1897*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd (London: William Heinemann; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 172–73.

17 Helen Burnham, "Changing Silhouettes," in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), 268–69.

TO REMAIN *à la mode*
WAS TO INHABIT A PRESENT
CONTINUALLY ON THE VERGE
OF BECOMING THE PAST

11

Victor Gabriel Gilbert

(FRENCH, 1847–1933)

A PARISIAN MARKET (UN MARCHÉ PARISIEN), 1878
signed *V Gilbert* and dated *1878* (lower left)
oil on panel
18 1/4 by 24 1/8 in. (46.3 by 61 cm)

PROVENANCE

Sale: Christie's, New York, October 29, 2003, lot 146
MacConnal-Mason, London
Private Collection (and sold Sotheby's, New York, April 18, 2008, lot 108)
Private Collection, California (acquired at the above sale)

Victor Gabriel Gilbert's *Un Marché Parisien* compresses the social world of nineteenth-century Paris into the space of a neighborhood market. Vegetable sellers in white bonnets, a domestic servant running errands, a soldier, and a fashionably veiled bourgeois mother walking with her child all occupy the same narrow field. No single figure dominates. Paris itself becomes the protagonist.

Clothing gives structure to the crowd. The bourgeois woman is dressed for public appearance; the maid's costume signals domestic service; the market women's bonnets belong to the practical vocabulary of labor. Their proximity is what makes the painting so compelling. Fashionable appearance existed alongside, and depended upon, a vast world of work, while dress made differences of class and occupation immediately legible within the crowded city.

Gilbert surrounds his figures with the signs of the modern metropolis: overflowing commercial displays, street lighting, and a Morris advertising column. The market is therefore neither a picturesque relic nor a timeless genre scene, but a cross-section of a city in which commerce, class, labor, motherhood, and fashion continually intersect. Every woman belongs to Paris; each inhabits it differently.



12

Johan Barthold Jongkind

(DUTCH, 1819–1891)

THE FLOWER MARKET, BOULEVARD RICHARD LENOIR, PARIS (LE MARCHÉ AUX FLEURS, BOULEVARD RICHARD LENOIR, PARIS), 1855
signed *Jongkind* and dated *1855* (lower left)
oil on canvas
16 by 23 ½ in. (40.6 by 59.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

Claudius de Jonge, Metz
Sale: Palais Galliera, Paris, 16 March 1973, lot 42
Sale: Sotheby's, London, 2 December 1981, lot 4
Private Collection, The Netherlands
Sale: Sotheby's New York, 7 May 2015, lot 1
Private collection, Dallas, Texas (acquired at the above sale)

LITERATURE

Victorine Hefting, Jongkind, sa vie, son œuvre, son époque, Paris, Arts et métiers graphiques, 1975, p. 102, no. 136, illustrated
Adolphe Stein, Sylvie Brame, François Lorenceau and Janine Sinizergues, *Jongkind, Catalogue critique de l'Œuvre,* Paris, 2003, vol. 1, p. 107, no. 150, illustrated
Colin Harrison, "Johan Barthold Jongkind, The Hague, Cologne and Paris," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 146, no. 1212, March 2004, pp. 192–194, p. 193

Johan Barthold Jongkind is remembered principally as a painter of landscape and light, which makes *The Flower Market, Boulevard Richard Lenoir, Paris* an extraordinary exception. Painted in 1855, the work turns away from the Seine and its architecture toward the human spectacle of the modern city. Flowers crowd the foreground, carriages and pedestrians animate the boulevard, and the July Column rises in the distance. Amid all this activity, one woman demands to be noticed.

Dressed in deep black with brilliant red ribbons at her bonnet, she lifts her skirt high enough to expose a white-stockinged leg and black boot. Contemporary viewers could have read the gesture, her conspicuous solitude, cosmetics, and extravagant accessories as signs of the *cocotte*—the fashionable mistress whose public visibility depended upon being both elegant and noticed. The women immediately behind her, by contrast, allow their skirts to graze the ground.

Jongkind makes the entire street participate in the act of looking. The woman becomes another brilliant commodity amid the flowers, parasols, carriages, and urban distractions. More than a decade before the Impressionists made the spectacle of contemporary Paris their central subject, Jongkind had already understood one of its essential dramas: in the modern city, to dress was also to enter the field of vision.



13

Ernest-Joseph Laurent

(FRENCH, 1859–1929)

PORTRAIT OF MADAME LE SIDANER, ca. 1900
signed and inscribed *AH LeSidaner/son ami/Ernest Laurent*
oil on canvas
35 1/2 by 30 1/4 in. (90 by 76.8 cm)

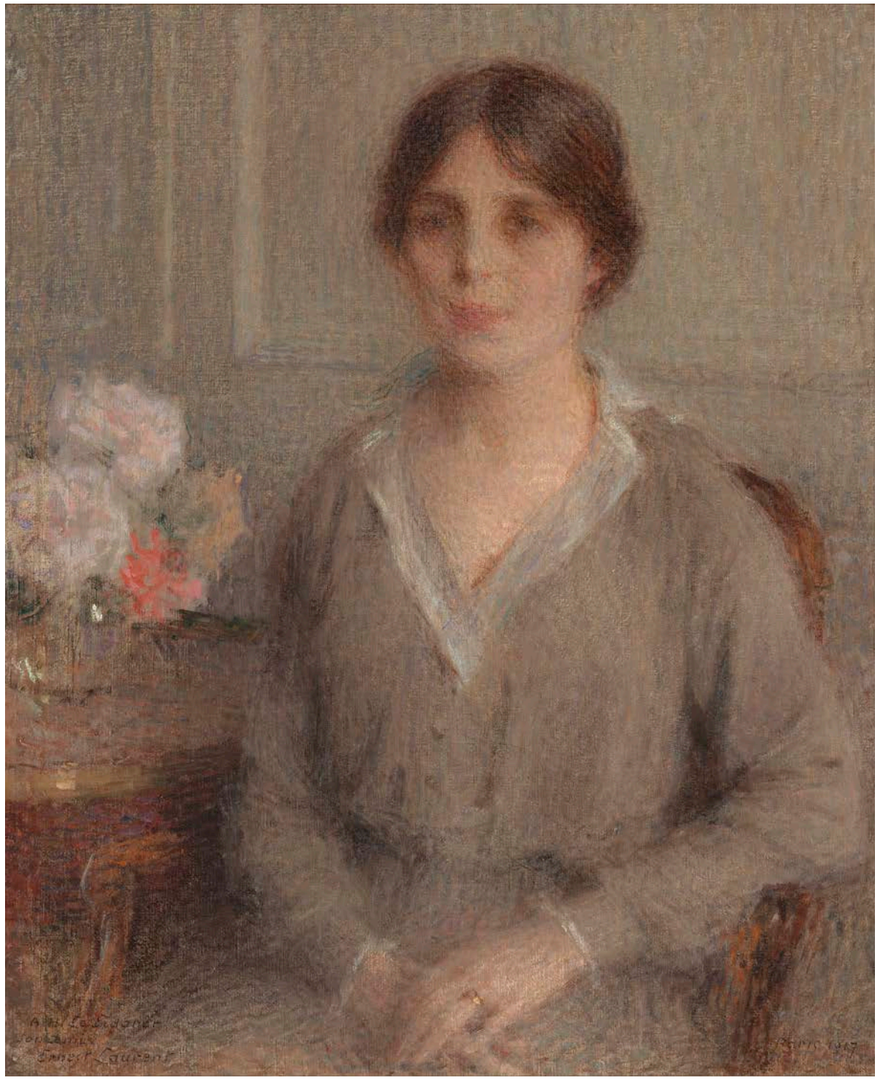
PROVENANCE

Private collection, France

Nothing in Ernest-Joseph Laurent's *Portrait of Madame Le Sidaner* clamors for attention. That restraint is precisely what gives the painting its distinction. Seated quietly with her hands folded in her lap, Madame Le Sidaner wears a muted gray-brown dress whose softly draped neckline and absence of conspicuous ornament contrast with the dazzling silks, hats, ribbons, and jewels so often associated with fashionable display.

The inscription dedicating the portrait to Henri Le Sidaner "from his friend Ernest Laurent" reinforces the intimacy of the image. This was not simply a formal presentation of social rank. Laurent appears to have painted a woman he knew within the private circle of another artist, and the subdued harmony of figure and room gives the portrait the character of personal observation rather than public performance.

Yet restraint did not place Madame Le Sidaner outside the world of fashion. By the later nineteenth century, sophisticated Parisian taste increasingly valued harmony, individuality, and discernment alongside novelty and luxury. Simplicity itself would become a mark of refinement. Her understated toilette therefore represents another expression of the Parisienne: not fashion as spectacle, but chic as the carefully judged art of knowing when less could say more.



14

Jean-François Raffaëlli

(FRENCH, 1850–1924)

ELEGANT LADY IN A GARDEN (ÉLÉGANTE DANS UN JARDIN), 1875
signed *J.F. Raffaëlli.* and dated *75.* (lower right)
oil on panel
7 1/8 by 4 3/4 in. (18.2 by 12.1 cm)

PROVENANCE

Sale: Art Valorem, Paris, 22 November 2019, lot 103
Private collection
Galerie Ary Jan, Paris, 2023
Private collection (acquired from the above)

CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ NOTE

Brame and Lorenceau have confirmed the authenticity of this work and will include it in their forthcoming catalogue raisonné.

In *Elegant Lady in a Garden*, Raffaëlli presents fashionable femininity at its most understated. The woman moves away from us through a dense private garden, her face almost entirely withheld. Instead, her identity resides in the long pale dress that trails behind her, patterned with narrow vertical stripes and fitted through the upper body before widening into the fashionable line of the mid-1870s. A dark ribbon at the back of her hair supplies the only emphatic accent.

Raffaëlli cleverly allows dress and landscape to converge. The vertical stripes answer the stems and branches surrounding the woman, while his quick handling moves effortlessly between fabric, flowers, and foliage. She is simultaneously set apart by fashion and absorbed into nature.

Such scenes belong to a period in which railway travel and suburban leisure carried Parisian habits well beyond the city. Contemporary fashion adapted to country and seaside environments, but it did not disappear there; the “flight to the country” often transplanted urban styles into new settings. Raffaëlli’s tiny painting captures that phenomenon with unusual delicacy. Even when no crowd is present to witness her, the Parisienne remains impeccably dressed.



15

Jean-François Raffaëlli

(FRENCH, 1850–1924)

RACES IN JERSEY (DEUXIÈME ÉTÉ À JERSEY - LES COURSES À JERSEY), ca. 1882
signed *JFRAFFAËLLI* (towards lower right)
oil and black chalk on cardboard
17 by 26 3/8 in. (43.2 by 67 cm)

When Jean-François Raffaëlli spent the summer of 1882 on Jersey, the fishermen, soldiers, vacationers, and summer residents of the island provided him with a new collection of the human "types" that fascinated him. In *Races in Jersey*, however, the race itself is almost incidental. One tiny horse appears in the distance while spectators climb and gather along the hillside. More than half the composition is given over to an audacious stretch of open green.

Racecourses were among the great social stages of nineteenth-century leisure. At Longchamp, fashion commentators famously devoted as much attention to the spectators' toilettes as to the horses, and couturiers even dressed prominent women as living advertisements. Raffaëlli approaches Jersey more obliquely, allowing the fashionable crowd to become part of the landscape rather than arranging it as a parade.

The painting later entered the collection of Jeanne Lanvin, who would become one of the defining French couturières of the early twentieth century. Its provenance creates an unexpected connection between two eras of French fashion: a nineteenth-century image of fashionable leisure later owned by a woman who helped shape the tastes of the generation that followed.

PROVENANCE

Jules Claretie, Paris (and sold his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 6 May 1914, lot 46)
Jeanne Lanvin, Paris, by 1926
By descent to Marie-Blanche Lanvin, Comtesse Jean de Polignac, Paris
Thence by descent

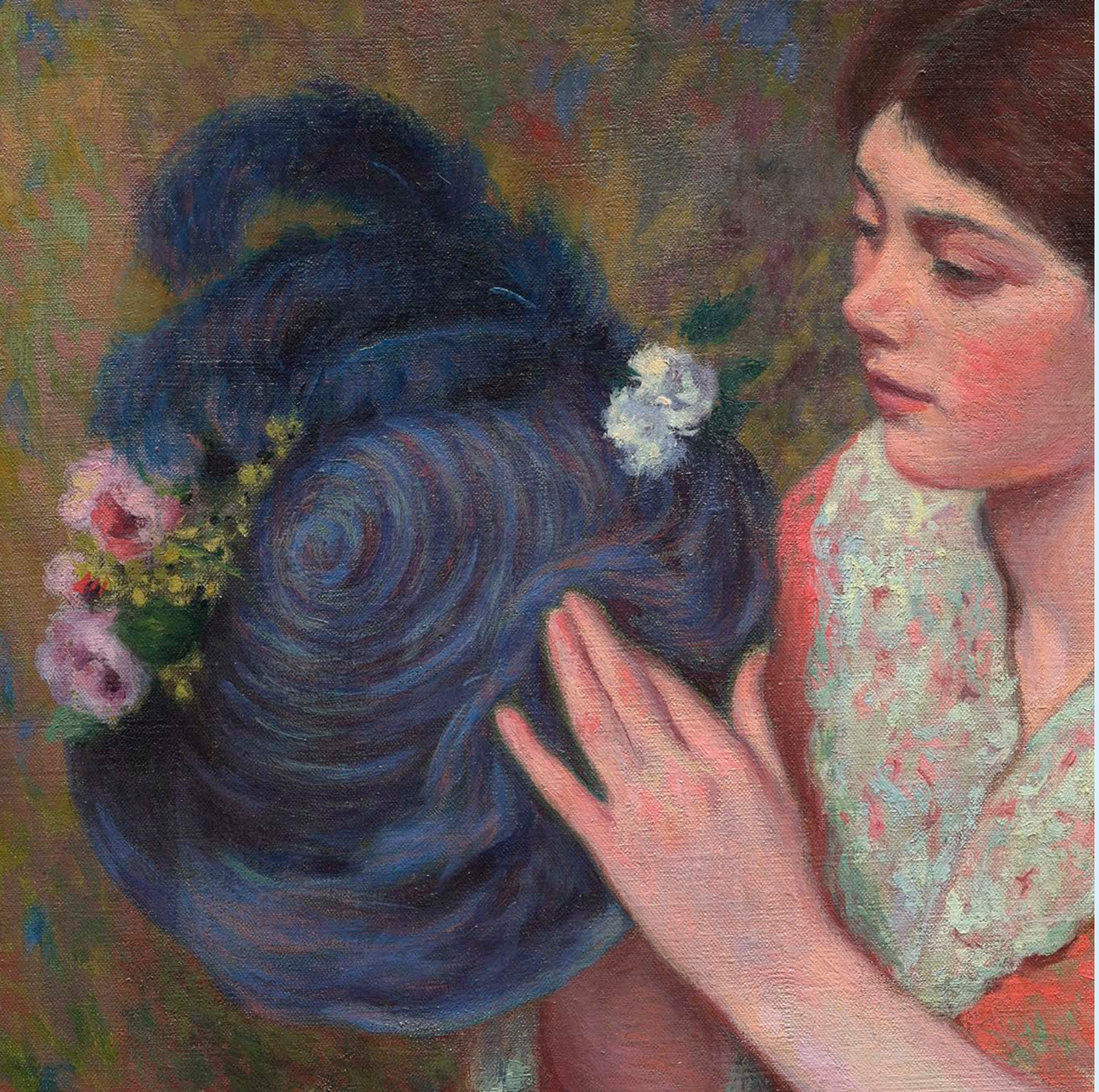
EXHIBITED

Paris, Boussod & Valadon, *Jean-François Raffaëlli*, 27 May–21 June 1890, no. 20
Possibly, Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, *Exposition Internationale de Peinture et de Sculpture*, Paris, juin 1886, no. 114, titled *Deuxième été à Jersey—les courses de Jersey*
Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, *Exposition Jean-François Raffaëlli*, June 1909, no. 23
Maisons-Laffitte, Château de Maisons-Laffitte, *Les courses en France des origines à nos jours*, 1926, no. 61 (as *Champ de courses à Jersey*)





Victor Gabriel Gilbert, *A Parisian Market* (detail)



ÉMILE ZOLA AND CONSUMER CULTURE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PARIS FRIPERIE, READY-TO-WEAR AND HAUTE COUTURE

POLLY SARTORI

"Fashionista" is a modern word; it was included in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the first time in 1999. However, when you define the term as someone who shows an interest in fashion or style, it would be safe to say that Cleopatra could be a fashionista. Therefore, in conjunction with our topic, it may also be said that fashionistas existed at all levels of society in 19th century Paris. We see this in the novels of Émile Zola, the great French Naturalist writer, and his monumental *Rougon-Macquart* cycle of twenty novels published between 1871 and 1893, which traced the lives of two branches of a fictional family under the Second Empire.

Like the painter Jean Béraud (cat. 3) who crisscrossed Paris in a carriage sketching scenes of the busy streets, Zola was also a serious documentarian recording in his notebooks everything he saw.[1] The denizens of Paris provided Zola with a multitude of sartorial sources for his novels. In much the same way, various levels of contemporary fashion begin to appear in the paintings of artists from the period.

Three of Zola's novels provide a snapshot of the Parisian shopper. They range from the lower classes exemplified by the young laundress, Gervaise in *L'Assommoir* (1877), to the petit bourgeois and bourgeois shoppers in *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883) and finally to those who could afford a gown from a well-known couturier, such as the courtesan Nana, in Zola's novel that bears her name (1880).

One thing is certain, the beautiful fashions that appear in nineteenth century French paintings—either from well-known names such as Claude Monet and August Renoir or to lesser-known artists like Auguste Toulmouche, Victor Gilbert or even Alfred Stevens—are often the features in a painting that capture our attention the most, and when the dresses and ensembles are sumptuous, they dazzle us. But where did they come from?

Federico Zandomeneghi, *The Hat Maker* (detail)

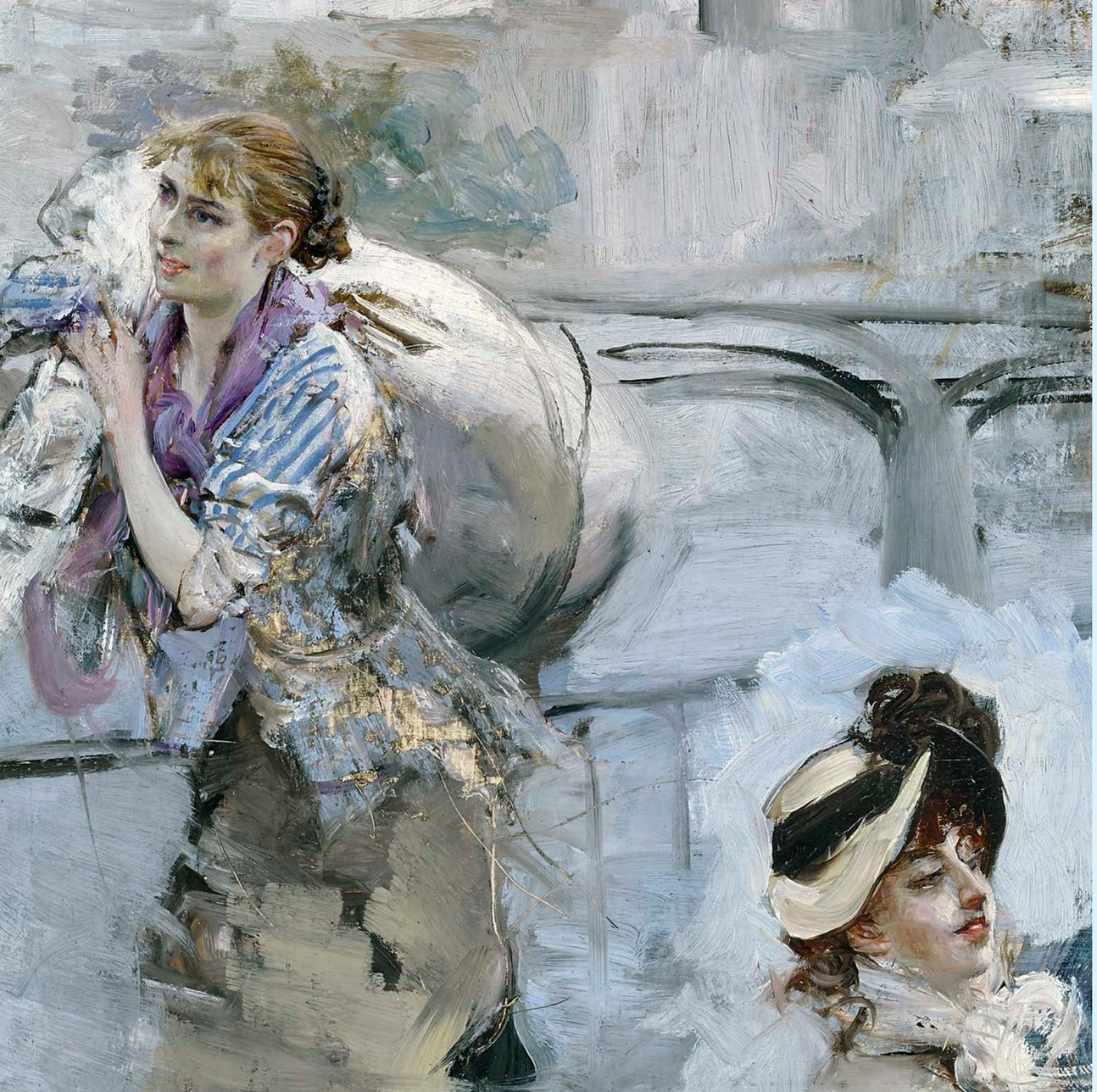




Fig. 1
Clothing market at the Carreau du Temple, Paris, late nineteenth century

Friperie and Le Carreau du Temple

Located in the old Temple neighborhood of Paris's 3rd arrondissement was the giant second-hand clothing and wares emporium, the Carreau du Temple (fig. 1). The trade in second-hand clothing was called *Friperie*; its vendors called "fripperers" (*marchands fripiers*). The Carreau du Temple was the preferred shopping destination for working class Paris, for those who could not afford new clothing. While there was some municipal regulation, friperie could be a shady business; used clothing could be deceptively dyed or patched, masking damages and imperfections. And it was a business of haggling with no price tags, and prices determined by cunning vendors sizing up eager customers. "A whole class of young women who love to haunt the Temple Market; chambermaids, maids, cooks, cleaning women earning fifty écus a year … Poor creatures, who work day and night, eat poorly, sleep on hard beds! But on Sunday, after a week of labor and privation, they have two hours of freedom: and they seize the chance to dress up a bit … Fabrics are expensive, and they have no time to cut and sew a dress. Hence, they rush to the Temple and buy a five-franc calico peignoir, a cheap barège fichu, or a tulle bonnet with pink ribbons. The poor girl has never had anything so pretty; she runs up her six flights, dresses before a mirror the size of her hand, and as pleased as a great lady goes to the dance hall behind the city gates."[2]

Zola provides a glimpse of this type of shopper in *L'Assommoir*. His protagonist, the young laundress, Gervaise Macquart is excited to find something pretty to wear on her wedding day. She saves 30 francs to buy a little silk mantle from a neighborhood shop marked 13 francs, spends 7 francs for cotton gloves, a rose for her hat, and for her wedding "gown" a deep blue woolen dress for 10 francs from the husband of a deceased laundress, which she resizes.[3]

Do we see this type of fashion in Giovanni Boldini's *Paris Types: A Study of Two Women* (cat. 5)? While the young laundress simply wears used or hand-me-down work clothes, the other model might be wearing a second-hand dress, perhaps sourced at the Carreau du Temple. She has embellished it with a delicate white bow at the neckline, long white gloves and a fashionable hat. Or perhaps she was shopping elsewhere. With the re-making of Paris under Baron Haussmann during the Second Empire, the friperie trade began to decline. Its biggest competitor was ready to wear clothing and the newly expanded department store.

Giovanni Boldini, *Paris Types: A Study of Two Women* (detail)



Fig. 2

Au Tapis Rouge, Paris, 1873. Advertising poster for the Grands Magasins de Nouveautés et de Vêtements, Maison Fleck Frères,I Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie



Fig. 3

A mercerie-nouveautés, France, ca. 1900

Ready to Wear and the Department Store

The grand Parisian department store as exemplified by the Bon Marché had its early origins in the *magasin de nouveautés* or large novelty store (fig. 2). These stores were springing up throughout Paris, next to traditional small family shops (fig. 3) that had been in business "alongside the dark, low-ceilinged, and stuffy holdovers from the ancient régime … and whose business practices were numbed by centuries-old habits."[4] These newly styled stores believed in advertising, offered set prices and "ready-to-wear" but most important of all, they provided a pleasing shopping experience for the consumer by using colorful and lavish displays. This unique merchandising idea had been lacking in the traditional family shops; it would become a trademark of the grand department store. But timing is everything; and as the friperie trade was replaced by the proliferation of ready to wear and the *magasin de nouveautés*, the *magasin de nouveautés* became replaced by the department store. Baron Haussmann's transformation of Paris, which resulted in the opening up of the city with grand boulevards, combined with improvements in public transportation, which allowed for greater fluidity in travel throughout Paris, provided the ideal foundation for the grand department store to flourish.



Fig. 4

The grand staircase of Le Bon Marché, Paris, 1872, published in *L'Illustration*, 30 March 1872

By the time Zola published *Au Bonheur des Dames* (*The Ladies Paradise*) in 1883, the Bon Marché was one of the most successful department stores in Paris (fig. 4). Shopping was now a leisurely activity. Many of the concepts that we take for granted today were introduced: fixed pricing instead of haggling (mannequins often had price tags replacing their heads), returns and exchanges, home delivery, the scheduling of seasonal sales and perhaps most important of all—free entry and browsing. In *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Zola's detailed descriptions of the elaborate displays, the clerks and especially the enthusiastic shoppers, were based on first-hand observations made during his visits to the Bon Marché and recorded in his notebooks.[5]



Fig. 5
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Madame Lerolle*, 1882,
The Cleveland Museum of Art

All shoppers were welcomed here. "There was a pell-mell of ladies dressed in silk, tradesmen's wives in shabby dresses, hatless girls, all of them excited and carried away by the same passion."[6] Zola provides detailed descriptions of some of the *Bonheur des Dames* shoppers: Mesdames Marty, for example, who goes on an intoxicating shopping spree racing from department to department purchasing everything in sight,[7] or the snobbish Madame Desforges, who boasts that her dressmaker named *Sauveur*, while expensive, is the only dressmaker in Paris who knows how to make a bodice and that she would only deem to buy things like gloves and hosiery at the *Bonheur des Dames*.[8] Interestingly, Zola provides great details about Madame Desforges's visit to the store on a major sale day, where she cannot resist purchasing a light grey travel coat.[9] Clearly Madame Marty and Desforges could be considered fashionistas, their "lust for luxury running riot as they dreamed of dresses, coveted them, feeling so happy in the world of clothes that they lived immersed in it, as they did in the warm air necessary to their existence."[10]

Federico Zandomeneghi's young hat maker (cat. 24) may have been a likely shopper at a Paris department store. Her colorful and delicately patterned blouse with its lace trim is made from the type of fabric that Zola described in detail in the chapters of *Au Bonheur des Dames*. While we cannot see Madeleine Lerolle's complete attire in Albert Besnard's portrait (cat. 4), was her wardrobe made by a talented dressmaker? In her portrait by Henri Fantin-Latour (fig. 5) she wears a white silk day dress, which is like the style in Béraud's *Un Figaro de Rêve* (cat. 3). Together with her wealthy husband, the painter Henry Lerolle, the couple entertained weekly at salons in their Paris home; the guests included many of the most well-known artists and musicians of the day. The Lerolles were affluent and they were rich and would have had the means to frequent a well-known Parisian couturier.

Albert Besnard, *By Candlelight* (*Madeleine Lerolle in Profile*) (detail)

Haute Couture and The House of Worth

Haute Couture, as we know it today, was invented by Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895); he dominated Parisian fashion during the second half of the nineteenth century. Worth was the inspiration for Zola's Monsieur "Worms, the couturier of genius to whom the great ladies of the Second Empire bowed down" in his 1872 novel, *La Curée*.[11] In addition to designing bespoke, "one of a kind" dresses for his most important clients, Worth also came up with the idea for what would become "the runway". Held at his atelier at 7, rue de la Paix (fig. 6), he would dress models in his latest creations; invited guests would make their selections, which would be custom made in his workshop.

Worth's clients included the European nobility (most notably the Empress Eugénie), the aristocracy, famous actresses and especially wealthy American women, many of whom would travel to Paris to purchase a complete wardrobe. Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II was adorned in a House of Worth gown at the famous Vanderbilt Costume Ball held in New York on March 26, 1883 (fig. 7). Today, fans of the popular HBO series *The Gilded Age* can marvel at the recreation of sumptuous dresses and gowns inspired by House of Worth designs.[12] For example, in one episode, Bertha Russell, a central character in the show (she is nouveau riche and married to a ruthless robber baron, who is clearly modelled after William Henry Vanderbilt, (1821-1885) is shown on her way to the Metropolitan Opera wearing an evening gown based on a known Worth pattern (fig. 8).



Fig. 6

The House of Worth, 7 rue de la Paix, Paris, late nineteenth century



Fig. 7

Mrs. Cornelis Vanderbilt II in the House of Worth "Electric Light" Costume, 1883, Museum of the City of New York

Fig. 8

House of Worth evening gown, ca. 1900, and its adaption for *The Gilded Age*





William Kissam Vanderbilt (William Henry's son) purchased Alfred Stevens' *Le Salon du Peintre* (cat. 20) for 50,000 francs during a visit to the artist's Paris studio in 1880. The scene depicted is set in Stevens' fashionable home on 65, rue des Martyrs. An avid collector himself, Stevens' room was filled with his extensive collection of paintings and luxurious objects. Occupying the room in the painting, as if they too were rare works of art, are three young women dressed in beautiful gowns. The detailed embellishments, which range from velvet tassels, silk flowers and delicate black lace, reveal these are no ordinary dresses, but represent the unique, one-of-a-kind quality only found in haute couture. Could they be from the House of Worth? In other words, only the very best to match Stevens' exquisite taste and only the most expensive for a Vanderbilt.

We now conclude with the fascinating Valtesse de la Bigne and a return to ÉmileZola. Valtesse was a famous nineteenth century Parisian courtesan and widely believed to have been the inspiration for Zola's 1880 novel *Nana*. "A courtesan would rise and take a bath scented with cologne while her hairdresser tended to her locks. She would be joined by a lover for lunch, after which she would take a nap before her afternoon promenade. Dinner and society were the order of the evening."[13] Valtesse has been linked to many of the most well-known literati and artists of the day; she and the painter, Henri Gervex were lovers from 1876 to around 1880, and she would often pose for him. Known for her cascading red hair, she is Gervex's model for *The Tub* (cat. 10) and for a full-length garden portrait wearing a lilac afternoon dress (fig. 9). "She [Valtesse] paid scrupulous attention to her appearance, and her wardrobe was constantly updated. Her dresses were ordered from Empress Eugénie's sought-after tailor, Charles Worth."[14]

We have now come full circle. Nana was first introduced by Émile Zola in *L'Assommoir.* She was the young daughter of the laundress Gervaise. When Nana was thirteen, she worked as an apprentice for an artificial flower maker. "She brought home odds and ends of ribbons from the shop ... and made them up into bow and knots with which she ornamented her dirty dresses."[15] When Nana grows up, like Valtesse de la Bigne, she becomes a famous Parisian courtesan of the Second Empire, and her extensive (and expensive) wardrobe now becomes the creation of the House of Worth.



Henri Gervex, *The Tub* (detail)

1 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Fonds Émile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, manuscripts and dossiers préparatoires, NAF 10265-10355].

2 F. d'Antonelle, "Le marché aux vieux linges," *Nouveau Tableau de Paris au XIXe siècle*, vol. I, Paris, 1834, pp. 358-359.

3 Émile Zola, *L'Assommoir*, trans. John Stirling, chap. 3, "A Marriage of the People," Project Gutenberg eBook, no. 8558.

4 Philippe Perrot, trans. by Richard Bienvenu, *A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton, 1994, pp. 54-55.

5 Émile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, dossier préparatoire, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, NAF 10277-10278.

6 Émile Zola, *The Ladies Paradise* (*Au Bonheur des Dames*), trans. Brian Nelson, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 241.

7 Ibid., chapter 9.

8 Ibid., pp. 79-80.

9 Ibid., p. 262.

10 Ibid., p. 76.

11 Émile Zola, *The Kill* (*La Curée*), trans. Brian Nelson, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 84-85.

12 Sarah Cascone, "The Gilded Age' Costume Designer shares her art historical Inspirations," *Artnet News*, June 2025.

13 Adrien Marx, *Les Petits mémoires de Paris*, Paris, 1888, pp. 163-5.

14 Catherine Hewitt, *The Mistress of Paris*, New York, 2017, p. 137.

15 Émile Zola, *L'Assommoir*, trans. John Stirling, chap. 11, "Little Nana," Project Gutenberg eBook, no. 8558.



Fig. 9
Henri Gervex (1852-1929)
Madame Valtesse de la Bigne,
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

16

Alfred Sisley

(FRENCH AND BRITISH, 1839–1899)

ON THE EDGE OF THE FONTAINEBLEAU FOREST (À LA LISIÈRE DE LA FORÊT DE FONTAINEBLEAU), 1868
signed *Sisley* and dated *68* (lower left)
oil on canvas
38 1/8 by 34 in. (96.8 by 86.4 cm)

Painted in 1868, *À la lisière de la forêt de Fontainebleau* belongs to the exceptionally rare group of early paintings by Alfred Sisley to survive from the decade before the first Impressionist exhibition. A monumental tree fills almost the entire canvas, its trunk and canopy fractured by shifting light. Human presence is reduced to three small figures: a young man reading against the trunk and, farther away, a couple beneath the open sky.

Their presence nevertheless changes the meaning of the landscape. Fontainebleau was not merely wilderness; it had become part of a newly accessible geography of modern leisure. The expansion of railway travel encouraged Parisians to make excursions to the countryside and seaside, bringing urban habits—and urban fashions—with them. Period fashion literature even recognized distinct modes of dress suited to the greater comfort and freedom of movement associated with country life.

Sisley does not make fashion his subject as Boudin or Tissot might. The figures nearly disappear into the landscape. Yet their quiet leisure situates the forest within the expanding world of modern Parisian experience. Here modernity does not announce itself with boulevards and shopwindows. It arrives quietly, in the form of a book, an excursion, and three city dwellers beneath a tree.

PROVENANCE

Paul Rosenberg & Co., Paris & New York
Probably, Alex Reid & Lefevre, London
Margaret Thompson Biddle Schulz (1897–1956), USA, ca 1945
Thence by descent, Joyce Ward MacKenzie, New York, 1956
Thence by descent

EXHIBITED

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *New York Collects, Paintings, Watercolors and Sculpture from Private Collections*, 1968, no. 204, p. 41

LITERATURE

François Daulte, Alfred Sisley, *Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint*, Lausanne, 1959, no. 11, ill., p. 45
François Daulte, *Sisley*, Milan, 1974, ill. p. 74
Sylvie Brame & François Lorenceau, *Alfred Sisley: Catalogue critique des peintures et des pastels*, Lausanne & Paris, 2021, no. 12, ill., pp. 44, 408



17

Henry Somm

(FRENCH, 1844–1907)

AT THE PUPPET SELLER (CHEZ LE MARCHAND DE MARIONNETTES), ca. 1880
signed *H.J. Somm* (lower right)
pen, brown ink and watercolor on paper
9 $^{11}/_{16}$ by 7 $^{5}/_{16}$ in. (24.6 by 18.6 cm)

PROVENANCE

Galerie Jane Roberts, Paris, 2017
Private collection, Dallas, Texas (acquired from the above)

EXHIBITED

New York, Emmanuel Moatti, *Henry Somm, an exhibition of watercolors depicting life in Paris during La Belle Époque*, 29 November–22 December 2001
Paris, Galerie Jane Roberts, Une vie parisienne, *Henry Somm (1844–1907), Dessins, aquarelles, gravures*, 23 March–28 April 2017, no. 6

LITERATURE

Auguste Saulière, *Les Leçons conjugales : contes lestes*, Paris, E. Dentu, 1881, p. 4

Shopping was one of the defining experiences of the new Paris, and Henry Somm turns it into a miniature social comedy in *At the Puppet Seller*. A fashionable woman pauses before a display crowded with toys and marionettes, one brightly colored puppet already dangling from her hand. Yet the puppet is more than a commodity: in Somm's satirical world, it also suggests the newly empowered modern woman's ability to make men into playthings of her own.

Her dress is itself another spectacle. A closely fitted pink bodice gives way to an elaborately draped skirt and train, while the large feathered hat adds a final flourish. The narrow line of the dress reflects the changing silhouette around 1880, when the pronounced *tournure* of the earlier 1870s had given way to a slimmer form, with fullness and drapery concentrated toward the back. Somm's quick pen strokes pick out gathers, folds, trimmings, feathers, and strings, subtly linking the careful construction of fashionable dress to the intricate marionettes on display.

The scene nevertheless belongs to the growing consumer culture of modern Paris. Boutiques and department stores offered new spaces in which women could look, compare, choose, and purchase with increasing independence. Somm turns that freedom into a playful warning: his impeccably fashionable Parisienne is not merely another object within the spectacle of the city. Here, she holds the strings.



18

Henry Somm

(FRENCH, 1844–1907)

THE LESSON (LA LEÇON), ca. 1889
signed *H.J. Somm* (lower right)
brown ink and pen on paper
10 by 8 in. (25.5 by 20 cm)

PROVENANCE

Jean-François Guérin Fine Art, Maisons-Laffitte, 1990
Galerie Jane Roberts, Paris, 2017
Private collection, Dallas, Texas (acquired from the above)

EXHIBITED

Maisons-Laffitte, Jean-François Guérin Fine Art,
Henry Somm (1844–1907), 1990, no. 32
Paris, Galerie Jane Roberts, *Une vie parisienne, Henry Somm (1844–1907), Dessins, aquarelles, gravures,* 23 March–28 April 2017, no. 15

LITERATURE

E.K. Menon, "Henry Somm: Impressionist, Japoniste or sympolist?," *Master Drawings*, London, vol. 33, no. 1, Spring 1995, p. 3-29, pl. 21, p. 25

Henry Somm delighted in the codes of fashionable Paris and in the possibilities of overturning them. In *The Lesson*, he transforms the familiar rituals of looking, judging, and choosing into a deft inversion of contemporary social conventions.

A stylish Parisienne stands before four men in top hats and overcoats. Each occupies a numbered platform like a model in a demonstration or a commodity in a shop display. With her hand raised in explanation, the woman seems to be delivering a lesson on the relative merits of the men before her. The familiar hierarchy has been neatly inverted. In a visual culture that so often submitted women to male scrutiny, Somm makes the woman the critic and the men the objects of inspection.

The joke also belongs specifically to the emerging consumer culture of Paris. Department stores and increasingly sophisticated displays trained shoppers to compare, classify, select, and reject goods, while women themselves became increasingly prominent consumers of the city. Somm simply extends that logic to courtship. His heroine is not waiting to be chosen. Fashionably dressed and completely self-possessed, she is doing the choosing.



19

Alfred Stevens

(BELGIAN, 1823–1906)

THE EXOTIC TRINKET (LE BIBELOT EXOTIQUE), 1865–6
signed *A Stevens* (upper right)
oil on panel
20 by 24 3/4 in. (50.8 by 62.8 cm)

In *The Exotic Trinket*, Alfred Stevens presents the fashionable Parisienne not merely as an object of display, but as a connoisseur. Elegantly dressed in black satin, velvet, and silk, she pauses before a carved Indian elephant from Stevens' own collection, surrounded by a Japanese screen, Persian carpet, and other precious objects.

The black gown has sometimes been linked to Princess Pauline von Metternich, the influential wife of the Austrian ambassador and an early patron of Charles Frederick Worth. Stevens may have borrowed the dress from her, a possibility that connects the painting to the fashionable circles surrounding Worth's Paris house and the emerging culture of haute couture. Though the connection remains uncertain, it speaks to Stevens' unusually close attention to contemporary dress.

Yet her attention is directed away from the viewer and toward the object before her. That absorbed gaze transforms the interior from a decorative backdrop into a field of curiosity and attention. The fashionable woman is shown not simply possessing beautiful things, but actively examining and appreciating them. In Stevens' vision, dress and collecting become parallel expressions of cosmopolitan sophistication, revealing a Parisienne whose identity is shaped as much by what she chooses to look at and acquire as by what she wears.

PROVENANCE

Charles Guasco, Paris (and his sale, Galeries Georges Petit, Paris, June 11, 1900, lot 79, as *Dialogue muet*)
Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris (acquired at the above sale)
Société anonyme Georges Petit, Paris by 1907
Maurice Despret collection, Brussels
Sale: Hotel Drouot, Paris, 23 June 1971, lot 155
H. Shickman Gallery, New York
Mr and Mrs Deanne Johnson, New York and Los Angeles, until 2004
Didier Aaron, New York
Private collection, California

EXHIBITED

Brussels and Anvers, *L'œuvre de Alfred Stevens, Catalogue de l'exposition organisée par la société royale des beaux-arts et l'art contemporain,* 1907, no. 71 (as *Dialogue muet*), lent by Société anonyme Georges Petit
Stockholm, Liljevachs Konsthall, *Exposition d'art Belge moderne,* September 1927
Brussels, Musées royaux des Beaux-arts de Belgique, *Alfred Stevens and Joseph Stevens, 1928*
Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, *Exposition Centennale de l'Art belge*, 1930
Brussels and Amsterdam, *Alfred Stevens* (*Brussels, 1823–Paris, 1906*), Royal Museums of Fine Arts 5 May 2009–23 August 2009; Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam 18 September 2009–24 January 2010, no. 69

LITERATURE

Paul Lambotte, "L'œuvre de Alfred Stevens, catalogue de l'exposition organisée par la société royale des beaux-arts et l'art contemporain, Bruxelles and Anvers," *L'Art Flamand & Hollandais, revue mensuelle illustrée*, Vol. 7, January–June 1907, p. 160
Marjan Sterckx, "Exhibition review of 'Alfred Stevens'," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2010), np., ill.



20

Alfred Stevens

(BELGIAN, 1823–1906)

THE PAINTER'S SALON (LE SALON DU PEINTRE), 1880
signed and dated *Paris 1880* (lower left); also signed with initials, titled, and dated on the stretcher
oil on canvas
34 1/4 by 45 3/4 in. (87 by 116.2 cm)

Few painters captured the fashionable Parisienne with the virtuosity of Alfred Stevens. In *Le Salon du Peintre*, painted in 1880, three elegantly dressed women gather in the artist's own reception room at 65, rue des Martyrs, surrounded by gilt mirrors, paintings, porcelain, flowers, patterned textiles, and a Japanese screen.

Their dress immediately situates the scene within the fashion of the late 1870s. Two visitors wear pale evening gowns with long, fitted cuirass-style bodices that mold the torso and hips before opening into elaborate trained skirts. Lace, embroidery, artificial flowers, jewelry, and a painted fan complete their toilettes. The woman seated on the red sofa, likely the hostess, is distinguished by a black dinner dress and the absence of gloves.

Yet in Stevens' world, fashion did not end at the hem of a dress. The room itself participates in the performance. Japanese objects, porcelain, luxurious textiles, and contemporary paintings transform the interior into an expression of cultivated, cosmopolitan taste. Dress, collecting, decoration, and sociability become part of the same fashionable language.

The painting's history reflects its extraordinary appeal. William Kissam Vanderbilt reportedly encountered the work in Stevens' studio and, despite the artist's reluctance to part with it, purchased it for the formidable sum of 50,000 francs. In *Le Salon du Peintre*, fashion becomes not simply a matter of clothing, but an entire world of modern Parisian taste.

PROVENANCE

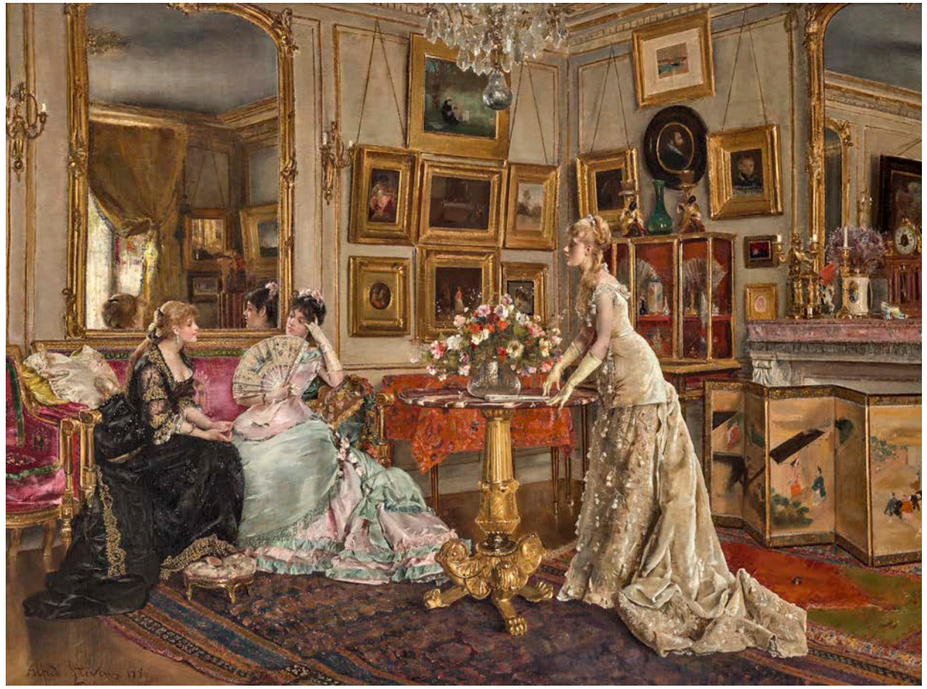
William Kissam Vanderbilt, 1880 (acquired directly from the artist)
Thence by descent to Cornelius Vanderbilt's daughter, Countess Szechenyi
Thence by descent to her niece, Mrs George Headley
Private collection, 1976
Sale, Sotheby's, New York, 7 May 1998, lot 195
Private collection, Connecticut (acquired at the above sale)

EXHIBITED

Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Museum of Art; Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery; Montréal, Musée des Beaux-Arts, *Alfred Stevens*, September 1977–March 1978, no. 32
Greenwich, Bruce Museum of Arts & Sciences, *Elegance & Opulence: Art of the Gilded Age*, September 17–December 5, 1999, cover of catalogue

LITERATURE

Robert de Montesquiou, "Alfred Stevens," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts,* 1 February 1900, p. 108–109
Camille Lemonnier, *Alfred Stevens et son œuvre,* Brussels, G. van Oest & Cie, 1906, p. 25–26
Philip Hale, "Alfred Stevens," *Masters in Art: A Series of Illustrated Monographs*, Boston, vol. 10, January 1910, p. 29
François Boucher, *Alfred Stevens*, Paris, Rieder, 1930, p. 32
Madeleine Ochsé, "Alfred Stevens, Peintre épris de modernité," *La Galerie*, no. 126, April 1973, pp. 46–47
Annie Paule Quinsac, *La borghesia allo specchio : il culto dell'immagine dal 1860 al 1920,* exh. cat. Milan, 2004, p. 12–14, illustrated
Peter Mitchell, *Alfred Stevens, 1823–1906,* exh. cat., London, 2004, no.13, p. 16, 23, 50–51, 65, illustrated
Christiane Lefebvre, *Alfred Stevens 1823–1906*, Paris, Brame & Lorenceau, 2006, p. 12, 16, 19, 133, 208, illustrated
Dominique Maréchal, Danielle Derrey-Capon, *Alfred Stevens 1823–1906*, exh. cat., Brussels, Royal Museums of Brussels, Amsterdam, Van Vogh Museum, 2009, no. 8, p. 40, illustrated p. 37
Danielle Derrey-Capon, "Les années 1880: Élèves, marines, bronchites, créanciers et femmes fatales," *Alfred Stevens (1823–1906) et le panorama de l'Histoire du siècle*, Gand, Snoeck 2009, p. 71
Griselda Pollock, "Louise Abbema's *Lunch* and Alfred Stevens' *Studio:* theatricality, feminine subjectivity and space around Sarah Bernhardt, Paris, 1877–1888," *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century,* edited by Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland, Ashgate 2017, p. 108



THE ARTIST AS COLLECTOR: ALFRED STEVENS AND *LE SALON DU PEINTRE*

JUSTINE DE YOUNG, PH.D.

Painted in 1880, *Le Salon du Peintre* depicts the lavish salon of Alfred Stevens' home at 65, rue des Martyrs, where the artist and his wife, Marie Blanc, regularly hosted friends and fellow artists. Stevens frequently used his home as a setting for his scenes of modern life, drawing upon the rich array of furnishings and *objets d'art* that surrounded him.

The well-appointed drawing room, decorated with Empire-style furniture, an Oriental rug, a Japanese screen, a crystal chandelier, and large gilt mirrors, testifies to the success Stevens had achieved by this time. A glass cabinet displays painted fans and porcelain, while smaller pictures and decorative objects fill the walls and mantelpiece. At the center, a large bouquet of pink, red, and white flowers rests on a round pedestal table with a lion-claw base. Late-afternoon light filters into the room, its glow reflected in the large mirror above the seated women. Among the works on the rear wall, hanging beside the candelabra, is an apparent depiction of Stevens' own *The Parisian Sphinx* (fig. 1). The painting with the woman in the red bodice and white satin skirt evokes Gerard ter Borch the Younger's similarly fashionable modern life scene, *The Suitor's Visit* (1658, National Gallery of Art).



Fig. 1
Alfred Stevens, *The Parisian Sphinx*, 1880, The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Ma

Alfred Stevens, *The Painter's Salon* (detail)

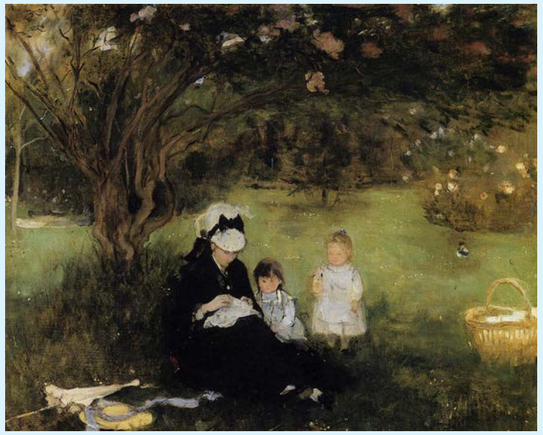


Fig. 2
Berthe Morisot, *Les lilas à Maurecourt*, 1874, Private Collection

The woman seated on the red sofa, her feet resting on a small tuffet, appears to be the hostess, distinguished from her guests by her black dinner dress, with its elbow-length sleeves and deep square décolletage, and by her lack of gloves. Her two visitors wear pale ballgowns with cuirass-style bodices, fashionable in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Fitted over the hips, the bodices feature narrow straps that leave the shoulders and upper arms exposed; elaborate skirts fall into long trains. Floral ornaments in their hair and pendant earrings complete their ensembles. Their elaborate gowns, luxuriously trimmed with tassels, embroidery, lace and artificial flowers, suggest that they may be on their way to a ball or other evening entertainment. The seated guest has removed one glove and holds a large hand-painted fan, an accessory that had become an important site for artistic experimentation. Berthe Morisot, Edgar Degas, and Louise Abbéma were among the artists who treated the fan as an artistic medium in its own right. A study for the standing woman, *Femme en blanc (fragment du Salon du Peintre, rue des Martyrs*), was exhibited at the 1907 Stevens exhibition in Brussels and Antwerp as catalogue number 76.

The paintings Stevens included in his interiors were likewise carefully considered. The most prominent among these is Morisot's *Les lilas à Maurecourt* (fig. 2), which hangs above six other smaller works on the rear wall. It depicts Morisot's sister Edma Pontillon with her daughters Jeanne and Blanche in the garden at Maurecourt, the Pontillons' family estate. Although Stevens is not known to have owned this particular painting, he clearly admired it, incorporating it into several compositions, including *Retour au Nid* (see Lefebvre 141). Its presence is particularly significant given the close ties between the Stevens and Morisot families. Stevens and Morisot moved within overlapping social and artistic circles, and their families regularly visited one another. Stevens owned a portrait by Morisot, as well as works by other contemporary artists including Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and Édouard Manet. Marie Blanc, who came from a wealthy Belgian family, brought with her a collection of Old Master and nineteenth-century paintings, including works by Hans Holbein, Théodore Géricault, and Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps (Lefebvre 133). Delacroix was a witness at Alfred and Marie's wedding. A red-chalk drawing of Marie Stevens by Théophile Gautier (1860, Private collection) rests on the mantel (Lefebvre 137).

Alfred Stevens, *The Painter's Salon* (detail)



Fig. 3
Édouard Manet, *The Croquet Game*, 1873, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

The presence of Morisot's painting is especially fitting given Stevens' longstanding support of women in the arts. He taught the actress and sculptor Sarah Bernhardt to paint in the 1860s and 1870s; Bernhardt identified him as her teacher when she exhibited her first painting at the 1880 Paris Salon. Stevens also offered advice and encouragement to other women artists, including Morisot, Eva Gonzalès, and Louise De Hem. Women artists and their studios appear repeatedly in his work, most notably in *The Visit* (1878, Clark Art Institute), *In the Studio* (1888, Metropolitan Museum of Art), and *Sarah Bernhardt in her Studio* (c. 1886, Birmingham Museum of Art). His friendship with Manet further connected him to the artistic and social networks of avant-garde Paris. The two artists shared friends, models, and, for a period, a studio, and met at the cafés Guerbois and Tortoni as well as at the Stevens residence for their regular Wednesday evening parties. Manet used Stevens' large garden at 65, rue des Martyrs, as the setting for his *Croquet Party* (fig. 3), which includes Stevens as one of the players. Degas was the godfather to Marie and Alfred's daughter Catherine.

According to early Stevens scholar Camille Lemonnier, during a visit to Stevens' studio, the American industrialist William Kissam Vanderbilt reportedly insisted on acquiring the *Salon du Peintre*, which Stevens had hoped to retain as a memento. Stevens set the price at the substantial sum of 50,000 francs, hoping to discourage the sale, but Vanderbilt quickly agreed (By contrast, his friend Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* would sell for merely 5,800 francs in 1884). Stevens produced a smaller watercolor version of the composition, perhaps to preserve the memory of the home he would soon have to leave as the French government forced its sale to allow for road construction. The street was subsequently named rue Alfred-Stevens in his honor, though Stevens would undoubtedly have preferred to retain the house and its large garden—the setting for so many of his paintings. Stevens also created a full-scale sketch on glass, more freely handled and decidedly more impressionistic in execution, to test lighting and color effects as he painted (Lemonnier 26). Jacques D'Aubais, a critic for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, praised the sketch in July 1882 for being "executed with such allure, such sparkle, and such a captivating quality that one could not dream of a more delightful feast for the eyes" (86). The same might be said of the finished painting, which by then had crossed the Atlantic to decorate Vanderbilt's Fifth Avenue mansion.

Through its luxurious setting, fashionable women, and carefully selected artworks, *Le Salon du peintre* offers both a portrait of Stevens' world and an evocation of the artistic and social networks that sustained it. The painting transforms his private salon into a stage on which Parisian elegance, artistic culture, and the pleasures of modern life converge.



Alfred Stevens, *The Painter's Salon* (detail)

21

Auguste Toulmouche

(FRENCH, 1829–1890)

ELEGANT WOMAN IN AN INTERIOR, 1872
signed *A. Toulmouche* and dated *1872* (lower left)
oil on canvas
25 1/2 by 21 1/4 in. (64.8 by 54 cm)

PROVENANCE

Sale: Christie's, New York, 26 October 2005, lot 180, as *The Blue dress*
Acquired by the present owner at the above sale

A contemporary critic urged viewers of fashionable paintings to examine every fold of a dress and every figure of its lace, while admiring equally the work of the upholsterer, cabinetmaker, decorator, and painter. Few works better reward that kind of close examination than Auguste Toulmouche's *Elegant Woman in an Interior*.

The deep sapphire gown dominates the picture. The satin, velvet, lace, and ribbon come alive as the light hits them. The fitted bodice, elaborate trimming, and fullness gathered toward the back is an example of the tournure, the silhouette that became in vogue in the early 1870s. Around the female figure, burgundy wall coverings, gilded furniture, polished wood, and porcelain heighten the sense of carefully orchestrated luxury.

For all the beauty of the gown and the opulence of the interior, the painting is not about the display of luxury but about the feeling of anticipation. The female figure is turned toward a clock, her elaborate toilette already complete. Is she preparing to leave, awaiting a visitor, or simply conscious of an approaching hour? Toulmouche captures the private interval before fashionable appearance enters public view. The painting reveals fashion not merely as something worn, but as something prepared: assembled through dress, grooming, surroundings, and the rituals that preceded a woman's appearance in society.



22

Auguste Toulmouche

(FRENCH, 1829–1890)

THE SERIOUS BOOK (LE LIVRE SÉRIEUX), 1874
signed *A. Toulmouche* and dated *1874* (lower right)
oil on canvas
32 1/2 by 25 in. (82.5 by 63.5 cm)

Exhibited at the Salon of 1874, Auguste Toulmouche's *The Serious Book* offers an unusually vivid study of the physical construction of fashionable dress. Two women recline on a red velvet sofa, their relaxed poses allowing fitted bodices, layered skirts, ribbons, lace, satin, and velvet to spill across the upholstery with characteristic precision. Toulmouche's meticulous differentiation of these materials—the sheen of satin, softness of velvet, delicacy of lace, and shifting effects of light—also demonstrates the considerable technical discipline required to make such luxury appear effortless.

Painted during a period of rapid change in women's fashion, the work captures the transition away from the broad crinoline silhouette of the 1860s toward fullness increasingly concentrated at the back of the body called tournure. Toulmouche makes that changing architecture especially visible through the seated figures: fabric gathers, folds, and cascades around them, revealing just how much engineering lay behind an appearance of effortless elegance.

The painting's early history adds another dimension. It was acquired by the American merchant Alexander Turney Stewart, whose enormous retail fortune had begun with imported linens and lace. *The Serious Book* thus passed from an image of fashionable luxury into the collection of a man whose business helped supply the materials and consumer culture that made such luxury possible.

PROVENANCE

Goupil & Cie, Paris, March 1874, no. 8843
Alexander Turney Stewart, August 1874 (acquired from the above)
Cornelia M. Stewart, New York (widow of the above and sold, her estate, American Art Association, New York, March 23–25, 1887, lot 39)
John H. Converse, Rosemont, Pennsylvania (acquired at the above sale and sold, his estate, American Art Galleries, January 6, 1911, lot 51)
Mrs. Stetson (acquired at the above sale)
Sale: Christie's, New York, 19 April 2005, lot 204 as *Afternoon Idyll*
Acquired by the present owner at the above sale

EXHIBITED

Paris, Salon, 1874, no. 1721

LITERATURE

"The Salon Paris," *The Athenaeum*, no. 2430, May 23, 1874, p. 705
"Le Livre Sérieux," *The Illustrated London News*, vol. LXV, December 12, 1874, p. 558, illustrated opp.
Edward Strahan, ed. *The Art Treasures of America,* Philadelphia, 1879, vol. I, pp. 39, 52, illustrated opp. p. 46
Kathryn J. Brown, *Women Readers in French Paintings 1870–1890,* Surrey, 2012, p. 20



23

Federico Zandomeneghi

(ITALIAN, 1841–1917)

THE ARTIST'S STUDIO, ca. 1880–90
signed (in ligature) *FZandomeneghi*
oil on canvas
22 by 16 1/8 in. (56 by 41 cm)

When the Venetian-born Federico Zandomeneghi settled in Paris in 1874, he entered a city in which fashion had become an increasingly visible expression of modern urban life. A close associate of Edgar Degas, Zandomeneghi exhibited with the Impressionists four times and, like Degas, repeatedly found his subjects in the everyday life of modern Paris.

The Artist's Studio is especially compelling because the fashionable woman is at its center. Still wearing her hat and a dark, closely fitted *costume tailleur*, she appears to have entered the studio directly from the street. Her manner, however, is unceremonious. With one knee planted on a red velvet chair, she leans over a portfolio, studying its contents with such absorption that her casual posture seems almost unconscious.

Zandomeneghi's subject recalls Degas, and in particular his images of Mary Cassatt examining works of art, where the woman is cast not as an ornament of the gallery but as its discerning eye. By placing his sitter in that lineage, Zandomeneghi makes the same claim for her: she is a woman looking, not a woman looked at. Still dressed for the world outside, she carries the visual codes of the fashionable Parisienne into the studio, yet her clothes do not define her. Dress establishes her social presence; it is her concentrated act of looking that ultimately determines her role within the picture.

PROVENANCE

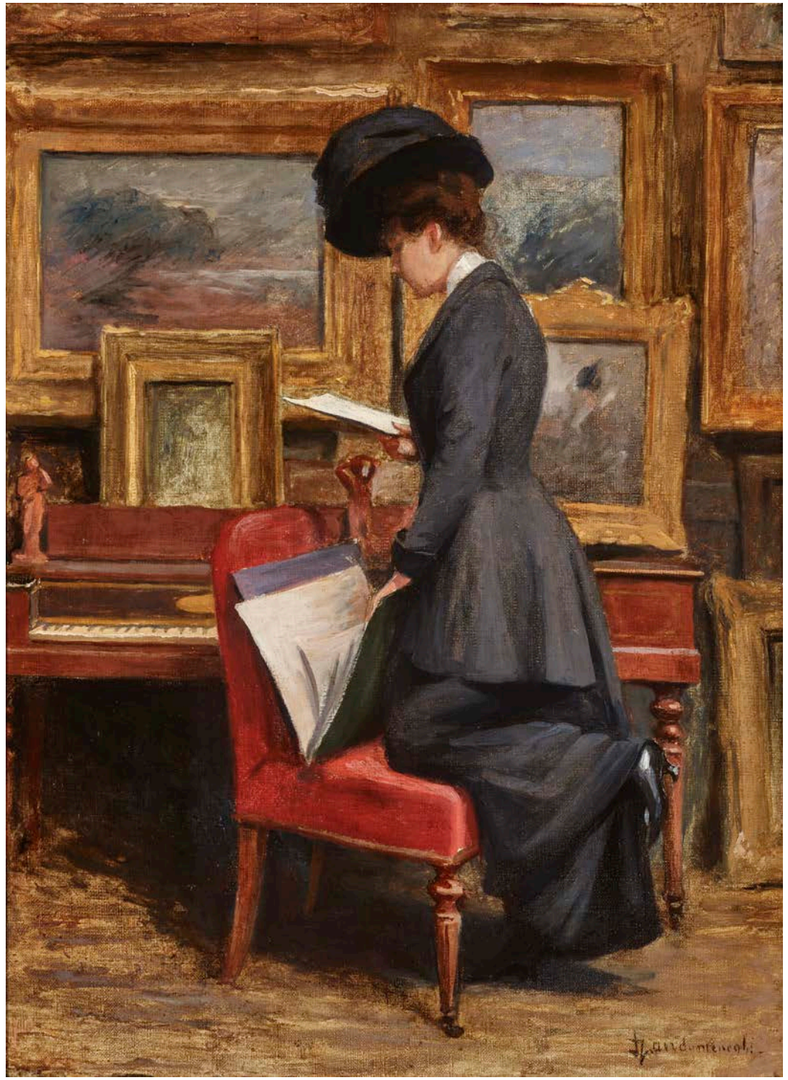
Mario d'Atri, Paris
Gaetano Sperati, Milan
Private Collection, Milan
Private Collection, Italy, 1982
Thence by descent

EXHIBITED

Paris, Salon des artistes indépendants, 1910
Milan, Galleria d'Arte Sant'Ambrogio, *La donna e i bimbi nell'arte del nostro Ottocento pittorico,* 10 April–4 May 1969, no. 50

LITERATURE

Mario Borgiotti, *Incantesimi dell'Ottocento pittorico italiano,* Milan, 1967
Enrico Piceni, *Zandomeneghi,* Milan, 1967, no. 310
Mario Borgiotti, Paul Nicholls, *la donna e i bimbi nell'arte del nostro Ottocento pittorico*, vol. III, Milan, 1969, no. 296
Enrico Piceni, *Federico Zandomeneghi catalogo generale, Nuova edizione aggiornata e ampliata,* Milan, 2006, no. 101, p. 219



24

Federico Zandomeneghi

(ITALIAN, 1841–1917)

THE HAT MAKER (LA MODISTE), ca. 1895–1910
signed *Zandomeneghi* (upper right)
oil on canvas
21 3/4 by 18 1/4 in. (55.3 by 46.2 cm)

The extravagant blue hat at the center of Zandomeneghi's *La Modiste* seems almost to bloom beneath the young woman's hands. Feathers, flowers, ribbon, and fabric dissolve into rapid strokes of cobalt and violet while the milliner, dressed more quietly in coral pink and deep plum, studies the object she is creating. A pincushion and the materials scattered around her make clear that the hat is not merely an object of fashionable display. It is the product of skilled labor.

The effortless elegance associated with the Parisienne depended upon a vast, largely female workforce of milliners, seamstresses, embroiderers, laundresses, dressmakers, and saleswomen. The fashionable object that would eventually ornament another woman's body is here shown at the moment of its construction.

Zandomeneghi gives dignity to that creative process. His modiste is neither anonymous nor mechanical; she appears absorbed in questions of form, color, and arrangement. She becomes, in effect, an artist in her own right, manipulating shape, color, and drape to achieve the desired effect. Fashion, in this richly painted scene, is not simply consumed. It is imagined and made.

PROVENANCE

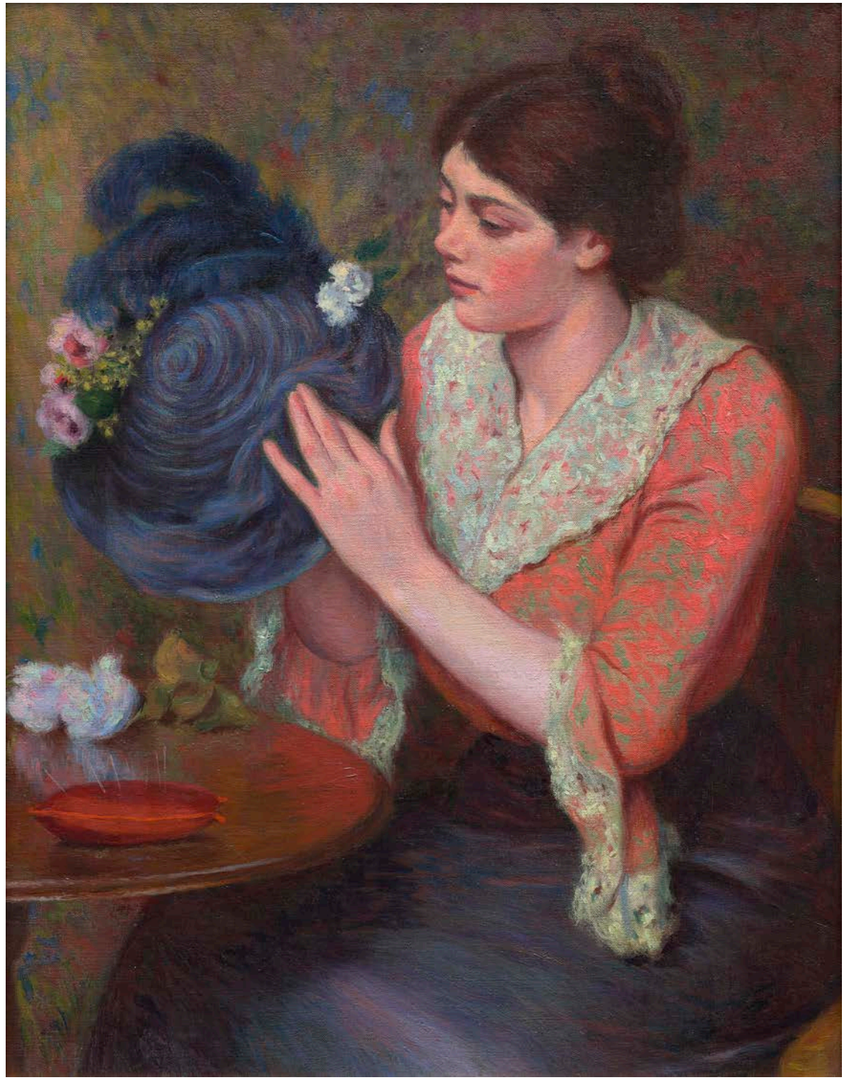
Durand-Ruel, Paris, 4 March, 1910 (acquired from the artist)
Angelo Sommaruga, Paris, 30 January, 1932 (acquired from the above)
Private collection, Milan

EXHIBITED

Milan, Fondazione Mazzotta, *Federico Zandomeneghi Impressionista veneziano,* 20 February–6 June 2004, no. 64, p. 101 (illustrated)
Rome, Chiostro del bramante, *Federico Zandomeneghi: un veneziano tra gli impressionisti,* November 2005–March 2006, no. 47, p. 71, p. 118 (illustrated)

LITERATURE

E. Piceni, *Zandomeneghi,* Milan 1967, no. 319
E. Piceni, *Zandomeneghi, Catalogo Generale dell'opera* (seconda edizione a cura di R. Capitani e M.G. Piceni), Bramante, Busto Arsizio, 1991, no. 319
E. Piceni, *Federico Zandomeneghi, Catalogo Generale,* Milan, 2006, no. 248, p. 255





Eugène Boudin, *Study for Crinolines* (detail)

LIST OF WORKS

THE FRENCH FASHIONISTA

Dressing the Women
of Nineteenth-Century Paris



1
Louise Abbéma
FRENCH, 1853–1927

PORTRAIT OF SARAH BERNHARDT, 1914
oil on board
13 5/8 by 9 5/8 in. (34.5 by 24.5 cm)



2
Paul Baudry
FRENCH, 1828–1886

PORTRAIT OF GUILLEMETTE DE LAREINTY, 1857
signed *B* and dated *1857* (right center); inscribed *GUILLEMETTE* (top center)
oil on canvas
18 1/2 by 13 3/4 in. (47 by 35 cm)



3
Jean Béraud
(FRENCH, 1849–1935)

THE FIGARO (UN FIGARO DE RÊVE), 1875–1880
signed *Jean Béraud* (lower left)
oil on canvas
25 1/2 by 21 1/2 in. (64.8 by 54.6 cm)



4
Albert Besnard
(FRENCH, 1849–1934)

BY CANDLELIGHT (MADELEINE LEROLLE IN PROFILE), 1885
signed and dated *Besnard 1885* (lower left)
oil on canvas
39 1/8 by 29 1/4 in. (99.5 by 74.2 cm)



5
Giovanni Boldini
(ITALIAN, 1842–1931)

PARIS TYPES: A STUDY OF TWO WOMEN, ca. 1878
oil on canvas
24 1/4 by 18 3/4 in. (61.6 by 47.6 cm)



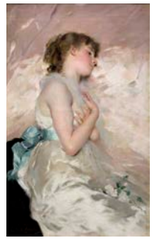
6
Eugène Boudin
(FRENCH, 1824–1898)

STUDY FOR CRINOLINES (ÉTUDES DE CRINOLINES), ca. 1865
pastel on paper
8 3/4 by 12 13/16 in. (22.2 by 32.5 cm)



7
Pierre Carrier-Belleuse
(FRENCH, 1851–1933)

THE PLEASURES OF PARIS (LES PLAISIRS DE PARIS), 1878
signed and dated *P. Carrier-Belleuse 1878* (lower left)
oil on canvas
19 3/4 by 25 3/4 in. (50 by 65.5 cm)



8
Charles Joshua Chaplin
(FRENCH, 1825–1891)

BEAUTY, ca. 1880
signed *CH. Chaplin* (lower left)
oil on canvas
26 by 16 1/2 in. (66 by 41.5 cm)



9
André Devambez
(FRENCH, 1867–1944)

BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE BY NIGHT, ca. 1902
signed *André Devambez* twice (lower left)
oil on canvas
14 by 17 3/4 in. (35.6 by 45.1 cm)



10
Henri Gervex
(FRENCH, 1852–1929)

THE TUB, 1888
signed *H. Gervex* (lower left)
oil on canvas
51 1/2 by 31 3/4 in. (131 by 80.5 cm)



11
Victor Gabriel Gilbert
(FRENCH, 1847–1933)

A PARISIAN MARKET (UN MARCHÉ PARISIEN), 1878
signed *V Gilbert* and dated *1878* (lower left)
oil on panel
18 1/4 by 24 1/8 in. (46.3 by 61 cm)



12
Johan Barthold Jongkind
(DUTCH, 1819–1891)

THE FLOWER MARKET, BOULEVARD RICHARD LENOIR, PARIS (LE MARCHÉ AUX FLEURS, BOULEVARD RICHARD LENOIR, PARIS), 1855
signed *Jongkind* and dated *1855* (lower left)
oil on canvas
16 by 23 1/2 in. (40.6 by 59.7 cm)



13
Ernest-Joseph Laurent
(FRENCH, 1859–1929)

PORTRAIT OF MADAME LE SIDANER, ca. 1900
signed and inscribed *AH LeSidaner/son ami/ Ernest Laurent*
oil on canvas
35 1/2 by 30 1/4 in. (90 by 76.8 cm)



14
Jean-François Raffaëlli
(FRENCH, 1850–1924)

ELEGANT LADY IN A GARDEN (ÉLÉGANTE DANS UN JARDIN), 1875
signed *J.F. Raffaëlli.* and dated *75.* (lower right)
oil on panel
7 1/8 by 4 3/4 in. (18.2 by 12.1 cm)



15
Jean-François Raffaëlli
(FRENCH, 1850–1924)

RACES IN JERSEY (DEUXIÈME ÉTÉ À JERSEY - LES COURSES À JERSEY), ca. 1882
signed *JFRAFFAËLLI* (towards lower right)
oil and black chalk on cardboard
17 by 26 3/8 in. (43.2 by 67 cm)



16
Alfred Sisley
(FRENCH AND BRITISH, 1839–1899)

ON THE EDGE OF THE FONTAINEBLEAU FOREST (À LA LISIÈRE DE LA FORÊT DE FONTAINEBLEAU), 1868
signed *Sisley* and dated *68* (lower left)
oil on canvas
38 1/8 by 34 in. (96.8 by 86.4 cm)



17
Henry Somm
(FRENCH, 1844–1907)

AT THE PUPPET SELLER (CHEZ LE MARCHAND DE MARIONNETTES), ca. 1880
signed *H.J. Somm* (lower right)
pen, brown ink and watercolor on paper
9 11/16 by 7 5/16 in. (24.6 by 18.6 cm)



18
Henry Somm
(FRENCH, 1844–1907)

THE LESSON (LA LEÇON), ca. 1889
signed *H.J. Somm* (lower right)
brown ink and pen on paper
10 by 8 in. (25.5 by 20 cm)



19
Alfred Stevens
(BELGIAN, 1823–1906)

THE EXOTIC TRINKET (LE BIBELOT EXOTIQUE), 1865–6
signed *A Stevens* (upper right)
oil on panel
20 by 24 3/4 in. (50.8 by 62.8 cm)



20
Alfred Stevens
(BELGIAN, 1823–1906)

THE PAINTER'S SALON (LE SALON DU PEINTRE), 1880
signed and dated *Paris 1880* (lower left); also signed with initials, titled, and dated on the stretcher
oil on canvas
34 1/4 by 45 3/4 in. (87 by 116.2 cm)



21
Auguste Toulmouche
(FRENCH, 1829–1890)

ELEGANT WOMAN IN AN INTERIOR, 1872
signed *A. Toulmouche* and dated *1872* (lower left)
oil on canvas
25 1/2 by 21 1/4 in. (64.8 by 54 cm)



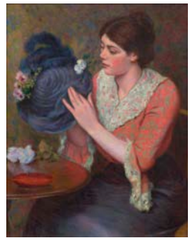
22
Auguste Toulmouche
(FRENCH, 1829–1890)

THE SERIOUS BOOK (LE LIVRE SÉRIEUX), 1874
signed *A. Toulmouche* and dated *1874* (lower right)
oil on canvas
32 1/2 by 25 in. (82.5 by 63.5 cm)



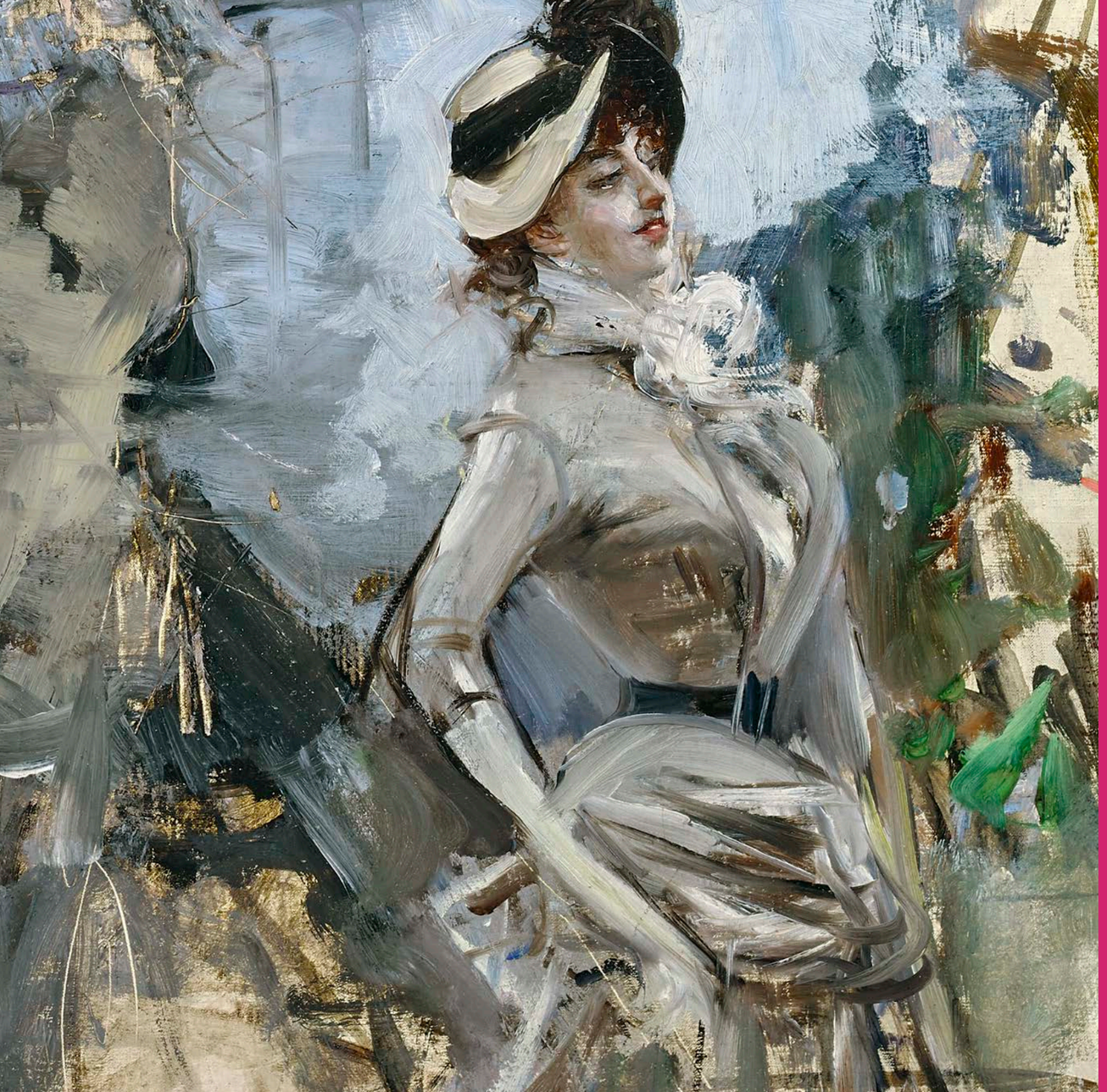
23
Federico Zandomeneghi
(ITALIAN, 1841–1917)

THE ARTIST'S STUDIO, ca. 1880–90
signed (in ligature) *FZandomeneghi*
oil on canvas
22 by 16 1/8 in. (56 by 41 cm)



24
Federico Zandomeneghi
(ITALIAN, 1841–1917)

THE HAT MAKER (LA MODISTE), ca. 1895–1910
signed *Zandomeneghi* (upper right)
oil on canvas
21 3/4 by 18 1/4 in. (55.3 by 46.2 cm)





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