



Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Madame Léon Clapisson

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*Madame Léon Clapisson*¹

1883

Oil on canvas; 81.2 × 65.3 cm (32 × 25 3/4 in.)

Signed and dated: *Renoir 83.* (upper right, in purple paint)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Martin

A. Ryerson Collection, 1933.1174



Renoir and the Clapissons

In a sleeveless gown of deep blue that complements her eye color, this confident socialite, the thirty-three-year-old Marie Henriette Valentine Clapisson, née Billet, is dressed for the ballroom.² Her costume is consistent with the elongated silhouette of the ball gowns appearing in the pages of the *Journal des demoiselles* (fig. 17.1).³ Featuring a close-fitting bodice, possibly of smooth velvet, the dress strikes a formal note with its simple band of sheer trim running along the neckline and shoulders. The strong line of the bodice contrasts with the exaggerated volumes of the ruffled bustle, also dark blue but made of shimmering, pleated silk accented with translucent red and yellow. Gold, silver, and amber bracelets over gloves the color of chamois leather provide contrasting tones and reflect the light. The white feather fan Madame Clapisson holds echoes her exotic hair adornment in texture and form. As rendered by Renoir, the overall effect of her costume is subtly elegant and seems calculated to demonstrate a progressive fashion sense.

Renoir claimed to have met the Clapissons at a salon hosted by Marguerite Charpentier, wife of publisher Georges Charpentier, a collector of Impressionist art since 1875.⁴ The Charpentiers were leaders in matters of taste within their social circle. They lent a bust portrait of Marguerite (1876; Musée d'Orsay, Paris [Daulte 226; Dauberville 465]) to the third Impressionist exhibition, which opened in April 1877, and they would no doubt have alerted their circle to the article by Georges Rivière in the April 21 issue of *L'impressionniste* urging wives of good Republicans to let an Impressionist paint “a ravishing portrait that will capture the charm with which you are gifted.”⁵ In April 1879, Charpentier’s publishing house launched *La vie moderne*, a literary and social journal edited by Émile Bergerat that featured regular reviews



fig. 17.1 “Two Women in Evening Dresses,” *Journal des demoiselles*, 1880. Steel engraving with hand coloring; 24.8 × 17.8 cm (9 3/4 × 7 in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

of art exhibitions, including those of the Impressionists, and reproduced illustrations and drawings by Renoir.⁶ The gallery of *La vie moderne*, situated at its offices on the boulevard des Italiens, hosted the first solo exhibition of Renoir's work (mostly pastels) in June 1879, the fifth in a series devoted to contemporary artists.

The Clapissons were typical of the readers of *La vie moderne*—culturally broad-minded enough to speculate in Impressionist painting but still supportive of the jury system of the annual Salon and of change from within. Léon Clapisson (fig. 17.2), son of the composer Antoine-Louis Clapisson, was a businessman who dabbled in stocks and real estate and had a passion for art collecting. As Anne Distel discovered, Léon already possessed a considerable fortune when he married Valentine (fig. 17.3), thirteen years his junior, in 1865.⁷ Clapisson began collecting seriously in 1879, and by the end of May 1882 he had acquired his first Renoir works from the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel: three paintings that the artist had brought back from a trip to Algeria in March and April.⁸ In a short period Clapisson amassed some 116 works, including works by artists of the Barbizon and Realist Schools. In addition to Renoir, Impressionist artists in his collection included Claude Monet, Gustave Caillebotte, Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, and Alfred Sisley. By 1885, however, Clapisson began selling his collection.⁹

The Clapisson Commission and Renoir's Impressionist Identity

Given the pace of Clapisson's acquiring in the early 1880s, it seems understandable that Renoir may have mistaken this collecting activity for a commitment to the aesthetic principles of Impressionism. However, the commission to paint Madame Clapisson's portrait proved to be one of the most frustrating of his career: the client rejected his initial attempt, now known as *Among the Roses* (fig. 17.4 [Daulte 428; Dauberville 1044]), and required him to paint the more conservative second version now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.¹⁰ This second version of Madame Clapisson's portrait is the "city" to the first version's "country"; the studied, sensual image of social ambition



fig. 17.2 Hippolyte Delié (French, active 1870–79). Léon Clapisson, c. 1875. Private collection.



fig. 17.3 J. C. Tourtin (French, active second half of the 19th Century). Valentine Clapisson, c. 1875. Private collection.

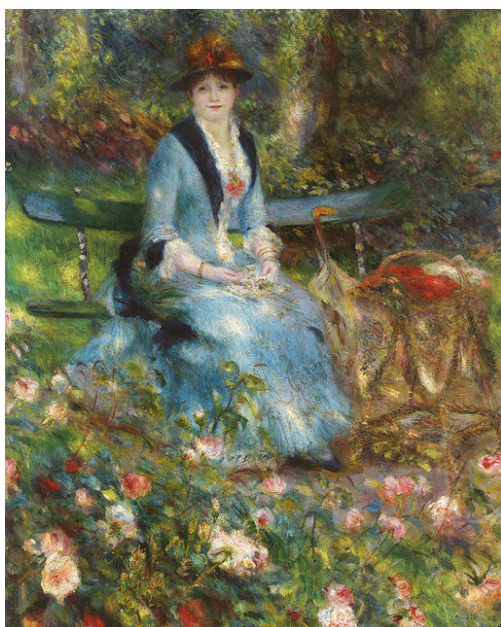


fig. 17.4 Pierre-Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919). *Among the Roses* (*Dans les roses*), 1882. Oil on canvas; 99.7 × 81.3 cm (39 1/4 × 32 in.). Private collection.

to the quintessential Impressionist female model in a garden setting—a work “full of gaiety and sunlight,” as Georges Rivière described the style of painting he recommended to potential portrait clients in 1877.¹¹ Renoir painted *Among the Roses* in the garden of the recently built Clapisson villa on the rue Charles Laffitte, Neuilly-sur-Seine (fig. 17.5). The artist apparently brought more than one canvas from Paris and stayed in Neuilly for about two weeks.¹² The first portrait, however, was the only painting he completed there.

In this first version of the Clapisson portrait, Renoir’s placement of Valentine in the middle ground and his decision to portray her garden as a rustic, overgrown park in Montmartre turned out to be ill conceived. Perhaps he had in mind Édouard Manet’s melancholic late canvas *The Artist’s Garden at Versailles* of 1881 (fig. 17.6), just purchased by Léon Clapisson the previous month, though the two could not be further apart in mood and gestural depiction of garden elements. By June 22 his client’s patience had apparently worn thin, and Renoir realized he had taken the wrong approach. He wrote to his friend and patron Paul Berard, including in the letter a quick sketch of his work in progress (fig. 17.7): “This wretched portrait . . . will not work . . . my days are spent taking the canvas back indoors . . . after making this exquisite woman put on a spring dress . . . and every day the same thing.”¹³ The sketch reveals that Renoir was already near completion of the work, and the fact that he could describe Madame Clapisson’s costume down to the “lace trim” and “little blue hat with a rooster” indicates that he took some pride in his work, even if his client grew dissatisfied.¹⁴ Though the Clapissons returned the first version to the artist later in the year, it did not languish as a failed portrait but rather was reinvented and circulated in exhibitions for years as a genre painting of contemporary life.¹⁵

By the autumn of 1882 the Clapissons had decided to return the first portrait with the expectation that Renoir would paint another with an indoor setting. This turn of events weighed heavily on the artist. It challenged the artistic ideals he had cultivated over the 1870s and forced him to accept the necessity of compromise if he wished to pursue portrait painting. He complained to Berard of how the commission affected his artistic license: “It’s not going well for the moment. I must begin Mme. Clapisson’s portrait all over again. It’s a big flop. . . . Well, all this takes a lot of thought, and with no exaggeration I must be careful if I don’t want to slip in the public’s esteem.” He continues, expressing with some sarcasm his bitter resignation to the more conventional approach to portraiture epitomized by the successful society portraitist Léon Bonnat: “I’m going to get back on the right path and I’m going to enlist in Bonnat’s studio. In a year or two I’ll be able to make 30,000,000,000,000 francs a year. Don’t talk to me any more about portraits in the sunlight. Nice black backgrounds, that’s the real thing. As soon as I have a minute, I’ll come and copy the portrait [by Bonnat] of M. d’Haubersart [Comte d’Haubersart, Berard’s grandfather].”¹⁶ While Renoir was not so richly compensated as Bonnat, he did receive the respectable sum of 3,000 francs for the Clapisson commission.¹⁷ Renoir’s anxiety over the portrait is perhaps partly explained by the high fee—twice as much as he reportedly earned in 1878 for the much larger *Madame Georges Charpentier and Her Children* (1878; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York [Daulte 226; Dauberville 239])—but was probably also due to his fear of alienating potential patrons within the Charpentier-Clapisson circle.¹⁸



fig. 17.5 The Clapissons’ hôtel particulier (now destroyed) at 48, rue Charles Laffitte in Neuilly-sur-Seine. Private collection.



fig. 17.6 Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883). *The Artist’s Garden at Versailles*, 1881. Oil on canvas; 65 × 80.6 cm (25 5/8 × 31 3/4 in.). Private collection. Photo © Christie’s Images/The Bridgeman Art Library.

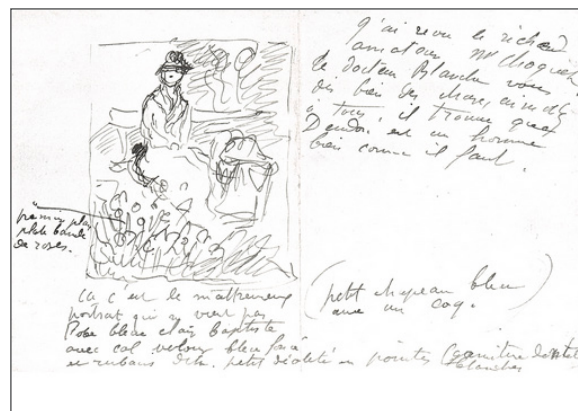


fig. 17.7 Pierre-Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919). Pen sketch for the first portrait of *Madame Clapisson*, from a letter to Paul Berard, June 22, 1882. Private collection.

A New Style Emerges

The circumstances surrounding the first version of the portrait of Madame Clapisson highlight a crisis in Renoir's Impressionist enterprise that ultimately led to a remarkable change of technique and the emergence of his "Ingresque" manner, the so-called sour or dry style, the masterpieces of which are *Children's Afternoon at Wargemont* (1884; Nationalgalerie, Berlin [Daulte 457; Dauberville 965]) and *The Great Bathers* (1884–87; Philadelphia Museum of Art [Daulte 514; Dauberville 1292]).¹⁹ To satisfy his clients, Renoir returned to the easel to paint a portrait of Madame Clapisson in a traditional setting with what the art critic Théodore Duret, in his biography of the artist, described as "tons plus sobres."²⁰ Though the firmer modeling of the second version can be compared to the academic-style portraits of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (see fig. 17.8), close examination of the brushstrokes within the dress, hair, fan, and background reveals that Renoir gave up nothing of his gestural randomness (fig. 17.9).

Renoir had used the dark backgrounds commonly seen in conventional society portraiture before, for example, in the series he executed of the Berard children in 1879 (see fig. 17.10 [Daulte 284; Dauberville 502] on following page).²¹ The backgrounds of the Berard portraits contain subtle color harmonies and are visually active in their brushwork and distribution of paint. Returning to such a background for the second version of the Clapisson portrait, Renoir proceeded to create a more sober look by first diminishing the luminosity of the white ground with mossy green, rusty red, and earthy yellow colors. These initial background colors were later painted out with the current crosshatched pattern of purples, pinks, and blues. This second background finish once looked much darker than it does today. When the painting is unframed, a small margin of dark red can be seen around the edges of the canvas (fig. 17.11, see following page). These edges have been protected from fading by the frame rebate and so retain their original color. The extension of this rich burgundy tone from the margins through some or all of the canvas behind the figure of Madame Clapisson completely alters not only the modulation of color in the background but also our understanding of how Renoir intended the red tone to balance with the dark blue of her dress and the lighter flesh tones.²²

Despite his acceptance of this change in approach for the second version of the portrait of Madame Clapisson, it became a source of frustration for Renoir, who wrote to Berard as it was under way in early 1883: "I cannot tell whether it will turn out to look much like her, since I am no longer capable of judging for myself."²³ Admonished and having amended his overly bold Impressionist portrait style, the artist sent the finished canvas to the Salon exhibition that opened May 1, 1883, where it was neglected by the many critics who reviewed the show, possibly because they perceived it as a compromise of styles. In spite of this disregard, Renoir had every reason to be optimistic about his career during the first half of 1883, with the completion of his three major full-length dance paintings and the April opening of his retrospective exhibition on the boulevard de la Madeleine, part of a series of solo Impressionist exhibitions organized by Durand-Ruel.²⁴ In his preface to the catalogue, Duret proclaimed Renoir the figure painter of Impressionism,



fig. 17.8 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (French, 1780–1867). *Madame de Senonnes, née Marie-Geneviève-Marguerite Marcoz, later Vicomtesse de Senonnes*, 1814. Oil on canvas; 106 × 84 cm (41 3/4 × 33 1/16 in.). Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes. Photo: Gérard Blot © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

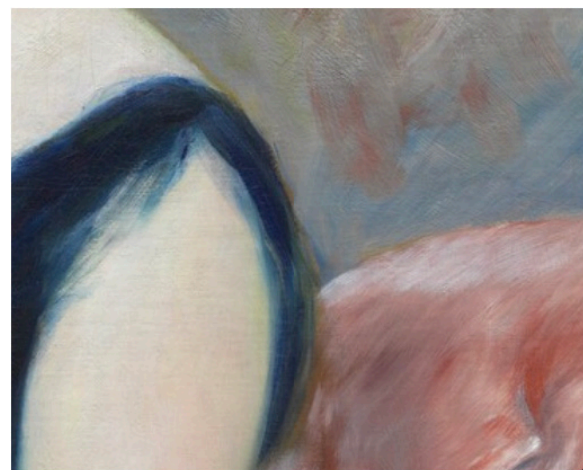


fig. 17.9 Detail of Renoir's *Madame Léon Clapisson* (1883) showing the artist's gestural brushstrokes. The Art Institute of Chicago, 1933.1174.

especially of women, and his reputation as a portraitist seemed assured.²⁵ Perhaps it was disappointment at the meager return on his investment of time, canvas, and money that affected Renoir's mood later in the year, but the difficulties he experienced with the Clapisson portrait commission and the cool reception the second version received at the Salon continued to haunt him. John Lewis Brown, who exhibited with the Impressionists in London in 1883, wrote to Durand-Ruel that September, noting that the Salon jury's issues with the Clapisson portrait were only to Renoir's credit: "The gentlemen of the jury could not help exclaiming (for the admission) that his painting was a 'blonde' Delacroix. What medal equals such appreciation from one's enemies?"²⁶ In December 1883 Berard, Renoir's confidant throughout the trying period of the Clapisson portrait, remarked on the toll it had taken on his friend. Writing to collector Charles Deudon, he expressed his concern: "As far as Renoir, he is in a crisis of discouragement. His vast studio scares him and he can't do anything there; except for the portrait of Mme Clapisson, I have seen nothing new and he has no new commissions."²⁷ While the self-doubt and uncertainty prompted by the Clapisson commission seemed insurmountable at the time, it nevertheless helped Renoir to develop as an artist and move on to further artistic accomplishment. Reflecting on these events decades later with the art dealer Ambroise Vollard, Renoir adopted a rosier perspective: "The charming Madame Clapisson, of whom I did two portraits, with what pleasure!"²⁸

The Clapisson portrait commission and the correspondence surrounding it provide a valuable case study of how the conflict between his own aspirations and his clients' expectations played a role in Renoir's forging of a new style in the 1880s; how he embarked on the commission with evident enthusiasm as a hardy Impressionist, ownreferencing his figures and landscapes of the 1870s by depicting Madame Clapisson in a garden setting, but ended with what John House described as "a remarkable synthesis of the conventions of Neo-Classical portraiture with a colourist palette."²⁹ The Clapissons remained cordial with Renoir, adding four more of his works to their collection.³⁰ After her husband's death in 1894, Madame Clapisson moved from the Neuilly villa and put most of the remaining Clapisson collection up for sale. The portrait remained in her possession until November 1908, when, apparently pressed for cash, she sold it to Durand-Ruel for 15,000 francs.³¹ She lived another twenty-two years, dying on August 30, 1930, two months before her eighty-first birthday.³²

John Collins

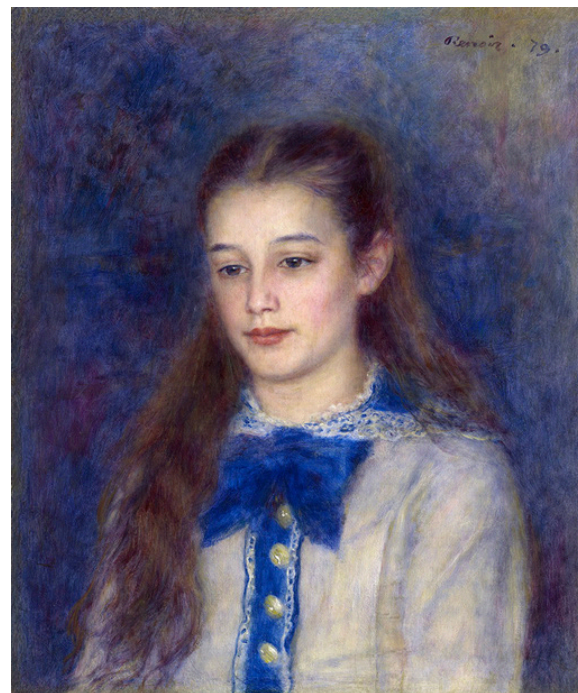


fig. 17.10 Pierre-Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919). *Thérèse Berard*, 1879. Oil on canvas; 55.9 × 46.8 cm (22 × 18 7/16 in.). Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass., 1955.593. Bridgeman Images.



fig. 17.11 Detail of Renoir's *Madame Léon Clapisson* (1883) showing the unfaded red paint along the edge of the painting. The Art Institute of Chicago, 1933.1174.

1
Madame Léon Clapisson (Daulte 422) corresponds to François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint*, vol. 1, *Figures, 1860–1890* (Durand-Ruel, 1971), pp. 298–99, cat. 433 (ill.). *Madame Léon Clapisson* (Dauberville 1065) corresponds to Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vol. 2, 1882–1894 (Bernheim-Jeune, 2009), p. 242, cat. 1065 (ill.). The Art Institute currently uses the title that resulted from the research conducted for Fort Worth, Tex., Kimbell Art Museum, *The Impressionists: Master Paintings from the Art Institute of Chicago*, June 29–Nov. 2, 2008. The painting had the following titles during the lifetime of the artist:

May 1, 1883: *Portrait de Mme C. . .* (*Catalogue illustré du Salon*, under the direction of F.-G. Dumas, exh. cat. [Librairie d'Art L. Baschet, 1883], p. 44, cat. 2031; according to François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint*, vol. 1, *Figures, 1860–1890* [Durand-Ruel, 1971], pp. 298–99, cat. 433 [ill.]; and Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vol. 2, 1882–1894 [Bernheim-Jeune, 2009], p. 242, cat. 1065 [ill.].)

June 15, 1886: *Portrait de Mme C.* (Galerie Georges Petit, *Exposition internationale de peinture et de sculpture, cinquième année*, exh. cat. [Renou & Maulde, 1886], p. 23, cat. 125; according to Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. [National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997], pp. 202–03, cat. 46 [ill.]; 319.)

June 1, 1910: *Portrait de Mme C. 1883* (Durand-Ruel, Paris, *Tableaux par Monet, C. Pissarro, Renoir, et Sisley*, exh. cat. [Durand-Ruel, Paris, 1910], p. 5, cat. 43; according to François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint*, vol. 1, *Figures, 1860–1890* [Durand-Ruel, 1971], pp. 298–99, cat. 433 [ill.].)

Possibly Feb. 14, 1912: *Jeune femme à l'éventail*, 1883 (Durand-Ruel, New York, *Exhibition of Paintings by Renoir*, exh. cat. [Durand-Ruel, New York, 1912], cat. 7; see “Renoir at Durand-Ruel's,” *American Art News* 10, 9 [Feb. 17, 1912], pp. 2, 9 [ill.], which reviews the exhibition and mentions that, “the fresh, clear color and truthful expression of ‘Mme. B. [sic]’ in her portrait reproduced in this issue” is among the works that were included in the exhibition. Presumably “Mme. B.” should read “Mme. C.” as the only works by Renoir reproduced in this issue are *Woman at the Piano* [as *Girl at the Piano*; see cat. 3 and *Madame Léon Clapisson* [as *Portrait of Mme. C.*]. The article does not specify under which catalogue number or title the painting was exhibited, but it is possible that it was as cat. 7, *Jeune femme à l'éventail*, 1883.)

July 8, 1913: *Portrait de Mme Clapisson*, 1883 (Purchase receipt on Durand-Ruel letterhead, dated July 8, 1913, photocopy in curatorial object file, Art Institute of Chicago.)

2
For complete biographical details, see Anne Distel, “Léon Clapisson: Patron and Collector,” and Colin B. Bailey, “Madame Clapisson, 1883,” in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 76–86, 202–03.

3
See Gloria Groom, “Spaces of Modernity,” in *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, ed. Gloria Groom, exh. cat. (Art Institute of Chicago/Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 165–85.

4
“C'est chez Madame Charpentier que je connus Juliette Adam, Maupassant et aussi cette charmante Madame Clapisson dont je fis deux portraits.” Ambroise Vollard, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Pierre-Auguste Renoir* (A. Vollard, 1919), p. 92.

5
“Un portrait ravissant dans lequel on retrouverait le charme ont votre chère personne est inondée.” Georges Rivière, “Aux femmes,” *L'impressionniste* 3 (Apr. 21, 1877), p. 2; author's translation. The portrait was exhibited as *Portrait de madame G. C., appartient à M. G. Charpentier*; see *Catalogue de la 3e exposition de peinture*, exh. cat. (E. Capiomont et V. Renault, 1877), p. 13, cat. 187. Daulte and Dauberville refer to the Renoir catalogues raisonnés: François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Durand-Ruel, 1971); Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vols. 1–5 (Bernheim-Jeune, 2007–14).

6
Ambroise Vollard, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Pierre-Auguste Renoir* (A. Vollard, 1919), p. 93.

7
At his marriage Clapisson contributed a 5,000 franc trousseau and 50,000 francs cash. Valentine, age fifteen, brought a 110,000 franc dowry and a 7,000 franc trousseau to the marriage—gifts from her father, who was also a stockbroker. See Anne Distel, “Léon Clapisson: Patron and Collector,” in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 84–85, n. 17.

8
The three paintings are *Mosque at Algiers* (1882; private collection [Dauberville 913]) for 2,000 francs; *Old Arab Woman* (1882; Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Mass. [Daulte 400; Dauberville 1056]) for 1,000 francs; and *Ali, the Young Arab* (1882; private collection [Daulte 406; Dauberville 1259]), for 1,000 francs, purchased on May 30, 1882. See the Clapisson journal reproduced by Anne Distel in “Léon Clapisson: Patron and Collector,” in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), p. 83. Daulte and Dauberville refer to the Renoir catalogues raisonnés: François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Durand-Ruel, 1971); Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vols. 1–5 (Bernheim-Jeune, 2007–14).

9
For the contents of Clapisson's notebooks listing his art collection, see Anne Distel, “Appendix II: The Notebooks of Léon Clapisson,” in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 346–56.

10
Daulte and Dauberville refer to the Renoir catalogues raisonnés: François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Durand-Ruel, 1971); Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vols. 1–5 (Bernheim-Jeune, 2007–14).

11
“Vous y avez vu des tableaux pleins de soleil et de gaieté,” Georges Rivière, “Aux femmes,” *L'impressionniste* 3 (Apr. 21, 1877), p. 2; author's translation.

12
“I'm in the process of packing my canvases to do Mme. Clapisson's portrait. I say my canvases because I will work in the garden so as not to waste my time.” Renoir to Paul Berard, undated, unpublished letter in the Durand-Ruel Archives; translated in Barbara Ehrlich White, *Renoir: His Life, Art, and Letters* (Abrams, 1988), p. 126. White dated the letter to fall 1882. Renoir possibly needed more than one canvas to accommodate changing lighting conditions.

13
“Le malheureux portrait qui ne vient pas . . . je passe toutes mes journées à rentrer ma toile . . . je fais mettre tous les jours une robe printanière à une femme exquise . . . et tous les jours la même chose.” Renoir to Paul Berard, June 22, 1882, in *Wemaëre-de Beaupuis, Rouen, Vente inaugurale*, sale cat. (Wemaëre-de Beaupuis, Rouen, May 31, 1992), no. 86; author's translation.

14
Renoir to Paul Berard, June 22, 1882, in *Wemaëre-de Beaupuis, Rouen, Vente inaugurale*, sale cat. (Wemaëre-de Beaupuis, Rouen, May 31, 1992), no. 86; author's translation.

15
It remained on the exhibition circuit as one of eight works by Renoir seen at *Les XX* in Brussels in February–March 1886, as *Sur le banc*. Immediately after this exhibition ended, Durand-Ruel included the work in his first New York showing of the Impressionists in April 1886, *The Impressionists of Paris, Works in Oil and Pastel*. By the end of the year it had been bought by New Yorker Albert Spence, making it one of the first works by the artist to enter an American collection. The art critic Théodore Duret, who remained closely involved with the Impressionists after his initial support in the 1870s, made a point of visiting Spence on a trip to New York in 1888, where presumably he congratulated the collector on his purchase and informed him of its history. “Y ayant fait un voyage en 1888, je pus le voir dans une collection, à New York.” Théodore Duret, *Renoir* (Bernheim-Jeune, 1924), p. 71.

16
Renoir to Paul Berard, undated, unpublished letter in the Durand-Ruel Archives; translated in Barbara Ehrlich White, *Renoir: His Life, Art, and Letters* (Abrams, 1988), pp. 126–27. White dated the letter to October 1882. Bonnat was an academic painter whose portraits were characterized by highly realistic figures set against very dark backgrounds. For more on Bonnat, see Alisa Luxenberg, “Léon Bonnat (1833–1922)” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1991).

17

The 1882 notebook listing Clapissou's Renoirs and the amounts he paid for them is reproduced by Anne Distel in "Léon Clapissou: Patron and Collector," in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), p. 82.

18

Renoir's fee of either 1,000 francs or 1,500 francs is recorded in Colin B. Bailey, "Madame Charpentier and Her Children, 1878," in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), p. 164. Daulte and Dauberville refer to the Renoir catalogues raisonnés: François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Durand-Ruel, 1971); Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vols. 1–5 (Bernheim-Jeune, 2007–14).

19

Daulte and Dauberville refer to the Renoir catalogues raisonnés: François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Durand-Ruel, 1971); Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vols. 1–5 (Bernheim-Jeune, 2007–14).

20

"Un premier portrait de Mme Clapissou, exécuté dans les tons très clairs et avec des fleurs de couleurs vives mises autour du modèle, était trop hardi. Il dut le garder pour en peindre un second de tons plus sobres, qui fut accepté." Théodore Duret, *Renoir* (Bernheim-Jeune, 1924), p. 70.

21

Daulte and Dauberville refer to the Renoir catalogues raisonnés: François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Durand-Ruel, 1971); Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles*, vols. 1–5 (Bernheim-Jeune, 2007–14).

22

The color change was examined in the exhibition *Renoir's True Colors: Science Solves a Mystery*, Art Institute of Chicago, Feb. 12–Apr. 27, 2014, <http://www.artic.edu/exhibition/renoir-s-true-colors-science-solves-mystery>. See also Paint Layer in the technical report.

23

"Je ne vois pas bien comment il viendra en ressemblance, je n'y vois plus rien." Renoir to Paul Berard, undated, excerpt in Drouot Rive Gauche, Paris, *Lettres et manuscrits autographes anciens et modernes, écrivains et peintres surréalistes*, sale cat. (Drouot Rive Gauche, Paris, June 22, 1979), no. 119; reprinted in Colin B. Bailey, "Child in a White Dress (Lucie Berard), 1883," in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), p. 317, n. 8; author's translation. Barbara Ehrlich White, in *Renoir: His Life, Art, and Letters* (Abrams, 1988), p. 129, dated this letter to early 1883.

24

The dance paintings are *Dance in the City* and *Dance in the Country* (both 1883; Musée d'Orsay, Paris [Daulte 440 and 441; Dauberville 1000 and 999]) and *Dance at Bougival* (1883; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [Daulte 438; Dauberville 1001]). Seventy works were displayed at the retrospective exhibition: *Exposition des oeuvres de P.-A. Renoir*, Durand-Ruel, Paris, Apr. 1–25, 1883.

25

"Dès l'abord nous lui reconnaissons la faculté de peindre la femme dans toute sa grâce et sa délicatesse, ce qui l'a conduit tout particulièrement à exceller dans le portrait." Théodore Duret, introductory preface, in Durand-Ruel, Paris, *Catalogue de l'exposition des oeuvres de P.-A. Renoir*, exh. cat. (Pillet & Dumoulin, 1883), p. 7. At the same time Renoir featured prominently at international exhibitions in London and Boston also organized by Durand-Ruel as part of a promotional campaign for the Impressionists in 1883. Nine Renoir works were included in *Paintings, Drawings and Pastels by Members of "La société des impressionnistes,"* Dowdeswell Galleries, London, Apr.–May 1883, and three were sent to Boston for the American Exhibition of Foreign Products, Arts and Manufacturers in May 1883.

26

"MM. les membres du jury n'ont pas pu (pour l'admission) s'empêcher de s'écrier que sa peinture était un Delacroix 'blond.' Quelle médaille peut valoir cette appréciation d'adversaires." J. L. Brown to Paul Durand-Ruel, Sept. 5, 1883, in Lionello Venturi, *Les archives de l'impressionnisme: Lettres de Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, et autres; Mémoires de Paul Durand-Ruel; Documents*, vol. 2 (Durand-Ruel, 1939), p. 97; author's translation.

27

"Quant à Renoir, il est dans une crise de découragement. Son vaste atelier l'épouvante et il ne peut rien y faire; sauf le portrait de Mme Clapissou, je n'ai rien vu de nouveau et il n'a aucune commande." Paul Berard to Charles Deudon, Dec. 12, 1883, in Anne Distel, "Charles Deudon (1832–1914) collectionneur," *Revue de l'art* 86 (1989), p. 62; author's translation. In October 1883 Renoir had moved from the rue Saint-Georges to a large fourth-floor studio at 37, rue Laval (today rue Victor-Massé), later occupied by Edgar Degas. See Robert McDonald Parker, "Topographical Chronology 1860–1883," in *Renoir Landscapes, 1865–1883*, ed. Colin B. Bailey and Christopher Riopelle, exh. cat. (National Gallery, London, 2007), p. 279. Berard must have been exaggerating about seeing nothing from Renoir since the Clapissou portrait, as the portrait of his youngest daughter, *Lucie Berard* (Child in White) (cat. 16), was also painted in 1883. Renoir also painted landscapes during a trip to the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey from early September to early October.

28

"Cette charmante Madame Clapissou dont je fis deux portraits, avec quel plaisir!" Ambroise Vollard, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Pierre-Auguste Renoir* (A. Vollard, 1919), pp. 92–93; author's translation. Renoir also told Vollard that it was about 1883 that he came to realize that he had hit a dead end with Impressionism and had arrived at the conclusion that he could neither paint nor draw: "Vers 1883 il s'est fait comme une cassure dans mon oeuvre. J'étais allé jusqu'au bout de "l'impressionnisme" et j'arrivais à cette constatation que je ne savais ni peindre ni dessiner. En un mot, j'étais dans une impasse." Vollard, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Pierre-Auguste Renoir*, p. 127.

29

John House, "Portrait of Madame Clapissou, 1883," in Hayward Gallery, *Galleries Nationales du Grand Palais*, Paris, and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Renoir*, exh. cat. (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1985), p. 238. For comparable work from the 1870s, see Colin B. Bailey, "Nini in the Garden, 1875–1876," in Colin B. Bailey, Joseph J. Rishel, and Mark Rosenthal, *Masterpieces of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: The Annenberg Collection* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989), pp. 30–31.

30

For evidence of continued relations between Renoir and the Clapissous, see Anne Distel, "Léon Clapissou: Patron and Collector," in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 80; 85, n. 35.

31

François Daulte provides the date of sale (Nov. 12, 1908) and the price in *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint*, vol. 1, Figures, 1860–1890 (Durand-Ruel, 1971), pp. 298–99, cat. 433 (ill.).

32

Biographical details are from Colin B. Bailey, "Madame Clapissou, 1883," in Colin B. Bailey, with the assistance of John B. Collins, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Canada/Yale University Press, 1997), p. 202.