

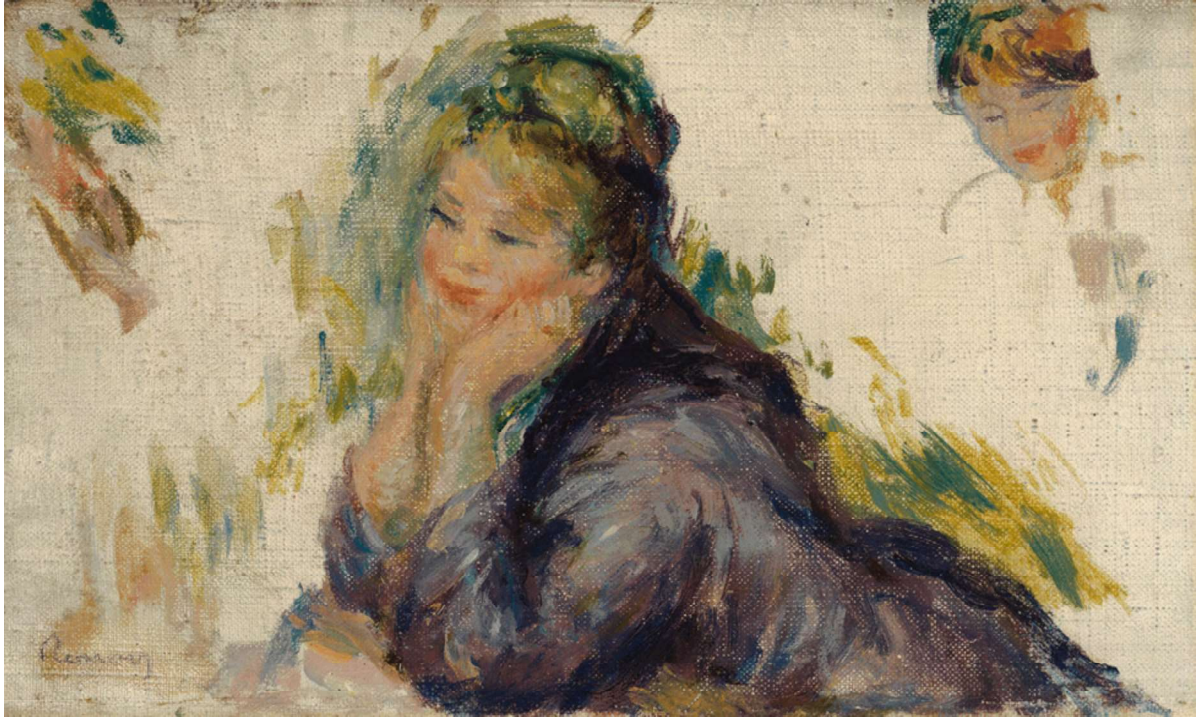
French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor



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Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"*, ca. 1887

Artist	Pierre-Auguste Renoir, French, 1841–1919
Title	<i>Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"</i>
Object Date	ca. 1887
Alternate and Variant Titles	formerly as <i>Femme accoudée</i> ; formerly as <i>Woman Leaning on Her Elbows</i>
Medium	Oil on canvas
Dimensions (Unframed)	5 1/2 x 9 in. (14 x 22.9 cm)
Signature	Signed lower left: Renoir
Credit Line	The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Gift of Henry W. and Marion H. Bloch, 2015.13.21

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Catalogue Entry

Citation

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Throughout his career, Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) filled hundreds of small canvases with informal sketches of women, producing the majority of these works from the late 1890s until his death in 1919.¹ Often left unfinished, such studies are considered a distinctive form of the artist's pictorial expression. Albert André (1869–1954), an artist and close friend of Renoir's later in his life, described Renoir's fixation with sketches: "It is these sketches that he most loves; it's in them that he expresses himself most fully, that he can be at his most audacious." André went on to quote Renoir: "'If I hadn't been obliged to paint pictures to sell to a dealer and to make a living, I would have painted nothing except these.'"² With their sitters frequently seated in profile or depicted at half-length, these multifigural works disclose little information about the sitters' identities or the settings. Indeed, the Nelson-Atkins sketch, formerly titled *Woman Leaning on Her Elbows (Femme accoudée)*, was once associated with these works as a continued "exercise in rapid figural transcription."³ Newly retitled *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"*, the work is now considered an exception to this pictorial anonymity. The sketch is now thought to be one of two preparatory studies (the other is Fig. 1) for

Renoir's painting *Young Girls Playing Volant*, formerly in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Fig. 2).⁴



Fig. 1. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant,"* ca. 1887, oil on canvas, 9 10/16 x 13 in. (24.5 x 33 cm), private collection



Fig. 2. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Young Girls Playing Volant*, ca. 1887, oil on canvas, 21 1/2 x 25 5/8 in. (54.6 x 65.2 cm), private collection

"A sort of break came in my work about 1883," Renoir told dealer Ambroise Vollard. "I finally came to the conclusion that I knew neither how to paint nor draw."⁵ Some scholars have termed this Renoir's "crisis" period, a time that found the artist searching for a way beyond the principles and aesthetics of Impressionism.⁶ In the time leading up to this reflection, Renoir traveled to Italy from October 1881 through February 1882, where he found himself "seized by the feverish desire to see the Raphaels."⁷ Upon his return to Paris later that year, he invigorated his Impressionist sensibilities with an artistic enterprise grounded in the study of tradition. Prompted by the examples of academic painter Jean Auguste

Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) and the frescoes of Raphael (Italian, 1483–1520), Renoir began a series of major figure paintings that concentrate on a more consolidated, linear approach to his subjects. Indeed, a few years before painting *Young Girls Playing Volant*, Renoir conveyed his interest in Ingres to his close friend and dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel: "When it comes to oil paintings, I prefer Ingres. . . . I've begun something, but I won't tell you what. It would ruin it. I'm superstitious."⁸ Reluctant to renounce his Impressionist style, he retained in his backgrounds the soft colors and visible brushstrokes ubiquitous in that movement. According to Richard Brettell, "the sheer informality of the Nelson-Atkins study has been difficult to place securely in time," because it lacks a complete affinity with either the artist's soft, Impressionist style, seen in his small-scale paintings from the mid-1870s, or the refined style of his small figural works of the 1890s.⁹ This transitional style is clearly at play in the Nelson-Atkins unassuming oil sketch, its related study, and the finished 1887 painting. All three works were produced during Renoir's most intense period of artistic experimentation, in which he wholly reassessed his style as a painter. In this sense, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* marks the immediate impact of the artist's experiment to reconcile the two styles of painting that would govern his work for years to come.

The finished painting, *Young Girls Playing Volant*, depicts five female figures, two of whom are playing volant, an early version of badminton, in the French countryside.¹⁰ The setting of the painting is a generalized, idyllic landscape featuring an outline of trees in the middle distance and a hazy hillside beyond. This somewhat formulaic background suggests that the painting was not painted en plein air but completed in the artist's studio as a carefully designed composition. This conclusion is supported by the existence of two preparatory studies: the Nelson-Atkins *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* and the aforementioned *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (see Fig. 1). In the finished, large-scale painting, Renoir replicated his models' poses seen in the two preparatory works. The woman leaning forward on her elbows and resting her chin in her hand in the final composition shares an affinity with the Nelson-Atkins half-length sketch of a young woman wearing a dark purple dress, with her hair in a topknot. Moreover, the arrangement and profile of the woman in pink, holding a racket, at the left of the finished canvas bears a striking resemblance to the portrait of the woman with a racket in *Study for "Young Girls Playing*

Volant." Note, too, the similarities of the secondary figure who appears in the upper-right corner of both preparatory studies. In the Nelson-Atkins sketch, she looks down with closed eyes. This same downcast expression can be found on the woman in gray leaning on the rock at the right of the finished composition. Similarly, the head of the woman to the far right of *Young Girls Playing Volant* matches the face of the woman in orange standing at the far left of the final canvas. Renoir also produced a compositional drawing of *Young Girls Playing Volant* (ca. 1885; private collection) that allowed him to explore these formulaic poses and groupings to greater effect.¹¹



Fig. 3. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *The Golden Age* (reduced version of his mural), 1862, oil on paper mounted on panel, 18 1/4 x 24 3/8 in. (46.4 x 61.9 cm), Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, Photo ©President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1943.247

Renoir could have been thinking of Ingres's heavily stylized painting *The Golden Age* (Fig. 3) when constructing *Young Girls Playing Volant*. *The Golden Age* was exhibited in 1867 at the Galeries de L'Ecole impériale des Beaux-Arts.¹² Renoir attended the 1867 exhibition and would have seen Ingres's painting there, but he would also have known it through reproductions that circulated widely throughout the French press.¹³ Ingres's influence is palpable in the frieze-like arrangement of the figures placed within Renoir's idyllic landscape. The careful staging of figures in *Young Girls Playing Volant*, fine-tuned through the three preparatory studies, is made all the more apparent by the concentration of crisp, hard edges that Renoir employed to silhouette his figures.



Fig. 4. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Great Bathers*, 1884–1887, oil on canvas, 46 3/8 x 67 1/4 in. (117.8 x 170.8 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Mr. and Mrs. Carroll S. Tyson, Jr., Collection, 1963, 1963-116-13

The combination of Ingres's academic style and the loose, gestural, Impressionist brushwork in Renoir's work prompted art historian Barbara Ehrlich White to develop the phrase "Ingrist Impressionist" when describing the artist's work in this vein.¹⁴ Indeed, the jeweled tones and sensuous strokes of deep purples and dark greens that outline Renoir's figures in the Nelson-Atkins sketch and its companion study anticipate the "Ingrist Impressionist" style seen in *Young Girls Playing Volant*, in which contoured figures are placed against a loosely rendered Impressionist background. Perhaps the fullest manifestation of this style is Renoir's *The Great Bathers* (Fig. 4) of 1884–1887, now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In this painting, the nude figures are separated wholly from their idyllic, Impressionist background. Although closely comparable in style to *The Great Bathers*, *Young Girls Playing Volant* is considered a more delicate approach to the "Ingrist Impressionist" style. The latter retains a softer, painterly touch throughout the background, reminiscent of Renoir's earlier Impressionist paintings, fusing the bodies of the young women playing volant with the rural landscape that surrounds them. Its palette is also far more vibrant than that of *The Great Bathers*. Art historian John House has highlighted Renoir's synthesis of these dueling styles at this time, writing that in *The Great Bathers*, "the conjunction of the rich Impressionist palette with the crisp contours in parts of the painting is a surprisingly stark juxtaposition of line and color, the two modes of rendering form that were traditionally opposed in academic theory and practice."¹⁵ While the Nelson-Atkins *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* and its finished composition are still works of Impressionism,

both are a bold representation of Renoir's developing "Ingrist Impressionist" style.

The sitter in the Nelson-Atkins painting, its related study, and the final composition share a likeness with one of Renoir's favorite models, Margot Legrand.¹⁶ A known beauty with light brown hair and sparkling blue eyes, Legrand posed for more than a dozen paintings by Renoir in the 1870s, including the famous *Dancing at the Moulin de la Galette* (1876; Musée d'Orsay, Paris) and *The Lovers* (ca. 1875; Národní Galerie, Prague). Although little is known about Legrand, considering the length of her tenure as Renoir's model and the number of compositions in which she appeared nude or scantily clad (for example, *Study: Torso, Effect of Sun*, ca. 1876, private collection; and *Little Blue Nude*, ca. 1878–1879, Albright-Knox Museum), theories abound that their relationship was romantic as well as professional. Tragically, Legrand died of typhoid in February 1879 at the age of twenty-three.¹⁷ Renoir remained at her bedside until her death. The numerous paintings that she modeled for possess an almost profound tenderness, and as Barbara Ehrlich White writes: "His strong reaction to her illness and death in 1879 suggests that they were lovers."¹⁸ This may explain why her image appears in numerous works, and possibly even in the Nelson-Atkins study painted about eight years after her death.

There is no firm evidence of the picture's provenance before it appeared in the New York collection of George N. Richards (1882–1972) in the 1960s. After Renoir's death, many of the small, informal sketches that remained in his studio were cut into even smaller paintings by gallerists like Durand-Ruel and Vollard.¹⁹ It is possible that the Nelson-Atkins work was once part of a larger canvas that was cut apart during the division of Renoir's paintings between his sons in 1922.²⁰ An alteration like this could explain, in part, why the Nelson-Atkins work temporarily lost its association as a study for *Young Girls Playing Volant*. Marion (née Helzberg, 1931–2013) and Henry Bloch (1922–2019) purchased the tiny Renoir in 1976 through Knoedler and Co. and gave it to the museum in 2015. A seemingly unassuming oil sketch on canvas, Renoir's *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* occupies a prominent place among the Bloch collection not only as the couple's first Impressionist acquisition but, now, as a work that anticipates the artist's progression toward a style that would occupy much of his oeuvre throughout his late life.²¹

Danielle Hampton Cullen
November 2021

Notes

1. Renoir's primary dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel, felt that these later sketches were harming Renoir's reputation and in 1903 tackled the issue head on: "You are quite wrong to give away or to let people take from you all these sketches. We are determined to only exhibit your best paintings." See Paul-Louis Durand-Ruel and Flavie Durand-Ruel, *Paul Durand Ruel: Memoirs of the First Impressionist Art Dealer (1831–1922)* (Paris: Flammarion, 2014), 213.
2. Albert André, *Renoir* (Paris: Georges Crès et Cie, 1928), 49–50.
3. Richard R. Brettell, "Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Woman Leaning on Her Elbows (Femme accoudée)*," in Richard R. Brettell, *Manet to Matisse: Impressionist Masters from the Marion and Henry Bloch Collection*, exh. cat. (Kansas City, MO: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2007), 92–93.
4. *Young Girls Playing Volant* was formerly in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (1931–1958) and most recently in the estate of collector Huguette Clark. See François Daulte, *Auguste Renoir: Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint*, vol. 1, *Figures, 1860–1890* (Lausanne: Éditions Durand-Ruel, 1971), no. 517, unpaginated. See also *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale, including property from the Estate of Edgar M. Bonfman*, Christie's, New York, May 6, 2014, lot 10. *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* will be published as such by Wildenstein Plattner Institute in their upcoming catalogue raisonné of the artist's work. See *Impressionist and Modern Art Part Two*, Sotheby's, New York, November 3, 2005, lot 134.
5. Ambroise Vollard, *Renoir: An Intimate Record* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1925), 118.
6. Many other names are used to describe these intense years of experimentation, some of which reflect his style (the "Ingresque" period), some of which are descriptive of the painting quality (the "dry period"), and some of which are more judgmental in tone (the "aigre" period and the "crisis" period). The term "Ingresque" is perhaps the most widely used. Among the historians who refer to Renoir's "Ingresque" style are John Rewald, *Renoir Drawings* (New York: Bittner, 1946); Anne Distel, *Renoir: Sensuous Vision* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995); and John House, "Renoir's

- 'Baigneuses' of 1887 and the Politics of Escapism," *Burlington Magazine* 134, no. 1074 (1992): 578–85.
7. Renoir to his friend and patron, Madame Georges Charpentier, fall 1881, cited in Nicholas Wadley, trans. and ed., *Renoir: A Retrospective*, exh. cat. (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1987), 138.
 8. For the translated letter, see Durand-Ruel and Durand-Ruel, *Paul Durand Ruel*, 170.
 9. Brettell, *Manet to Matisse*, 92.
 10. Also known as "battledore and shuttlecock," volant was a popular pastime among the upper classes in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Players used small racquets to keep a lightweight shuttlecock up in the air for as long as possible by batting it back and forth. In contrast to the later game of badminton, no net was used. For more on the history of the game, see *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information (1910-1911)*, 11th ed. (New York: The Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, 1910), 3:534.
 11. Illustrated in Guy-Patrice and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue Raisonné des Tableaux, Pastels, Dessins et Aquarelles* (Paris: Éditions Bernheim-Jeune, 2007), no. 1479, p. 2:495.
 12. *Tableaux, études peintes, dessins et croquis de J.-A.-D. Ingres peintre d'histoire, sénateur, membre de l'Institut*, exh. cat. (Paris: École Impériale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1867), no. 421, p. 71. For its bibliographic and exhibition history, see Georges Wildenstein, *Ingres* (London: Phaidon Press, 1956), no. 301, p. 227. Two more examples of Ingres's academic style are *Une Odalisque* (ca. 1814; Musée du Louvre, Paris) and *Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière* (ca. 1806; Musée du Louvre, Paris). See Wildenstein, *Ingres*, nos. 24 and 43.
 13. See, for example, Edouard Gatteaux, *Collection des 120 dessins, croquis et peintures de M. Ingres classés et mis en ordre par son ami Edouard Gatteaux* (Paris: A. Guérinet, 1875), unpaginated, as *L'Age d'Or*.
 14. For the purposes of this essay, the aforementioned term "Ingrist Impressionism" seemed the most apt when discussing the Nelson-Atkins study and its finished canvas. For this term, see Barbara Ehrlich White, *Renoir: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2017), 113–15, 128–30, 139–55.
 15. John House, *Renoir in the Barnes Foundation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 111.
 16. Margot Legrand's real name was Alma-Henriette Leboeuf. See Colin B. Bailey, *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 13. For more information on Margot Legrand and her association with Renoir, see White, *Renoir: An Intimate Biography*, 74–75.
 17. See Paul Gachet and Eugene Murur, *Lettres impressionistes* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1957), 81–82, 83.
 18. Barbara Ehrlich White, *Renoir: His Life, Art and Letters* (New York: Abradale Press, 1984), 51.
 19. House, *Renoir in the Barnes Foundation*, 62. For more information on the division of Renoir's canvases, see John House, "Renoir's Studio and Its Afterlife," in *Renoir in the Barnes Foundation*, 47–62.
 20. However, with no paint continuing onto the tacking margins, there is not enough data to support this theory. See Mary Schafer's accompanying technical entry. For more on the division of paintings by the Renoir brothers, see Sylvie Patry, *Renoir: Father and Son*, exh. cat. (Paris: Flammarion, 2018).
 21. Alice Thorson, "A Tiny Renoir Began Impressive Obsession: Bloch Collection Gets Its First Public Exhibition," *Kansas City Star*, June 2, 2007, <https://www.kansascity.com/latest-news/article294930/A-tiny-Renoir-began-impressive-obsession-Bloch-collection-gets-its-first-public-exhibition.html>. For more information on this purchase and the Bloch collection, see Thomas M. Bloch, *Many Happy Returns: The Story of Henry Bloch, America's Tax Man* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 174–75.

Technical Entry

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Mary Schafer, "Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Study for 'Young Girls Playing Volant'*, ca. 1887," technical entry

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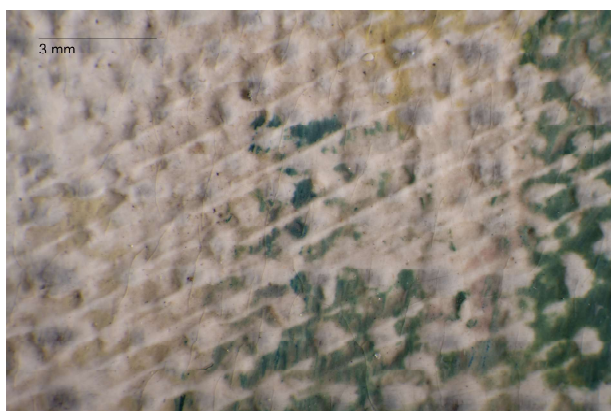


Fig. 5. Photomicrograph of *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887), showing the diagonal texture of the ground

In preparation for *Young Girls Playing Volant* (Fig. 2), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) completed a small-scale oil sketch that portrays two female figures in separate vignettes, one centrally placed and another at the top right. The lightweight, plain-weave canvas, with its varying thread thickness and weave irregularities, is primed with a thin white ground that continues onto the tacking margins. The ground exhibits a subtle diagonal texture across the picture plane and left tacking margin, a feature that has been observed on other works by the artist (Fig. 5).¹ This texture was unevenly distributed across the canvas and may correspond to a thin, lightly brushed, second priming layer, applied by either a color merchant or the artist.^{2,3}

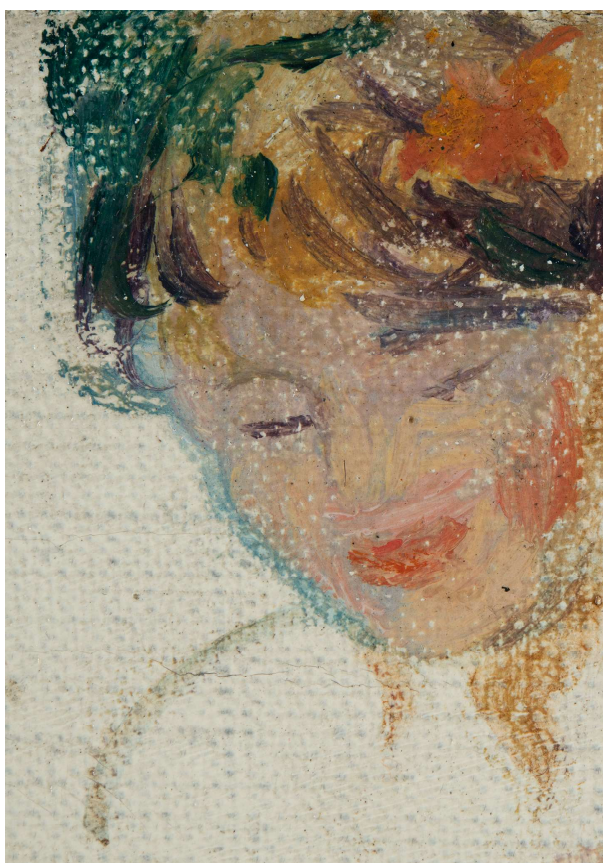


Fig. 6. Detail of the upper right figure, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887)

Two faint diagonal lines of unknown medium are located near the central figure's elbows and extend up toward the left edge, perhaps a suggestion of the adjacent figure's shoulder depicted in the larger, finished painting.⁴ Renoir appears to have positioned the figures with only a few fluid blue outlines, painted with a finely-tipped brush (Fig. 6).⁵ The figures were blocked in with thin layers of color, slightly more robust than a wash but thin and fluid enough to allow the underlying white ground to remain apparent, particularly at the high points of the canvas weave texture. As Jean Renoir (1924–1978) described, his father "was very careful to keep an impression of transparency in his picture throughout the different phases of his work."⁶ In contrast to these early washes of color that remain visible in the completed study, subsequent painting involved fine brushes, between one to five millimeters wide, and predominantly opaque paint. Using somewhat curving, directional paint strokes, Renoir began to build volume, establish highlights, and define the figures (Fig. 7). This aspect of Renoir's technique echoes Marc Elder's

description of the artist's process: "Little by little he makes the forms more precise. . . . A few more strokes and you can see emerge from the colored mist of the first stage the soft and round forms on which shine the brilliance of precious stones, enveloped in transparent, golden shadows."⁷



Fig. 5. Photomicrograph of *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887), showing the diagonal texture of the ground

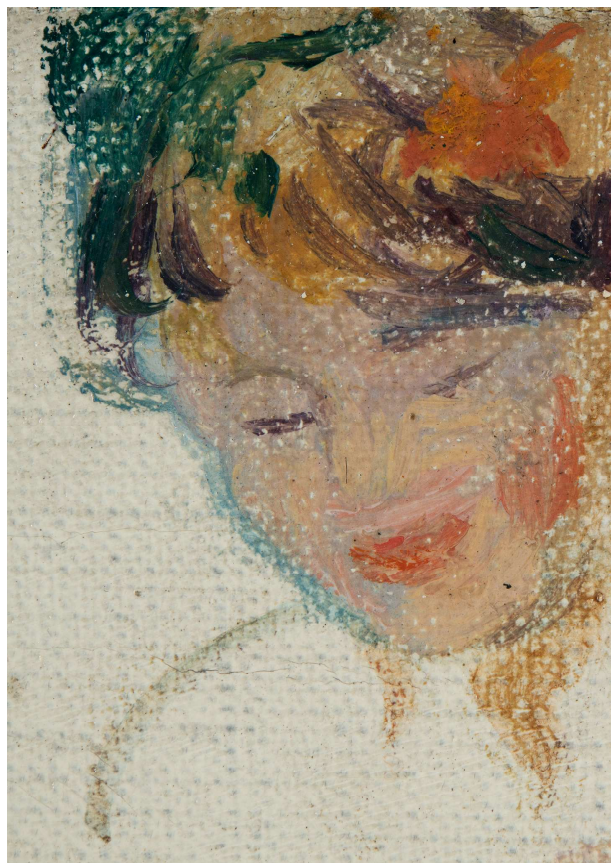


Fig. 6. Detail of the upper right figure, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887)

Bright accents of color, quick touches of paint, and lively brushwork delineate the faces, while broader strokes of dark blue and purple strengthen the contours and shadows of the central figure's dress. The immediacy of Renoir's brushwork and extent of wet-over-wet and wet-into-wet painting suggest that the study was completed over a short period of time. Throughout the sketch, wet-over-wet paint applications produce some intermingling of paint colors, like the blurring of the peach and purple paint used to render the upper figure's eye (Fig. 8).

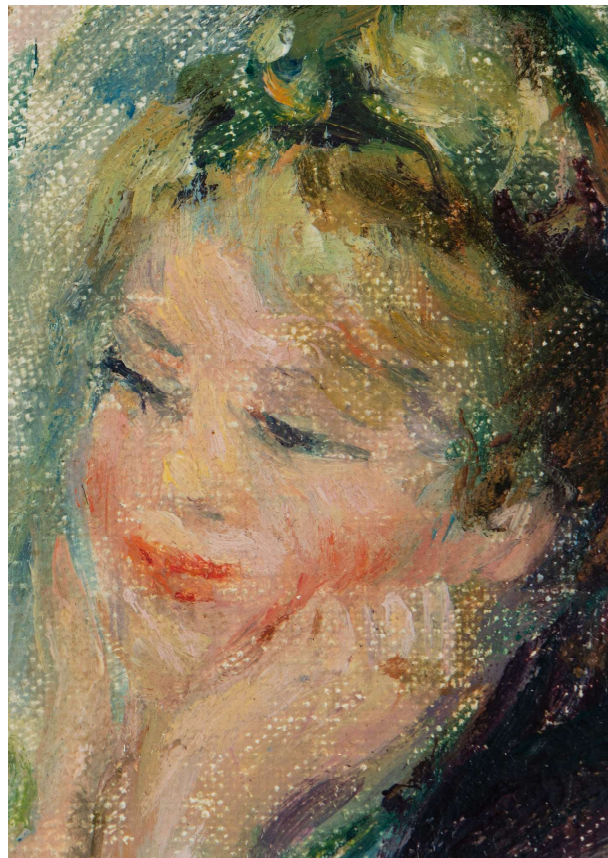


Fig. 7. Detail of the central figure, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887)



Fig. 8. Photomicrograph of the upper figure's proper left eye, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887), showing the artist's wet-over-wet application of paint

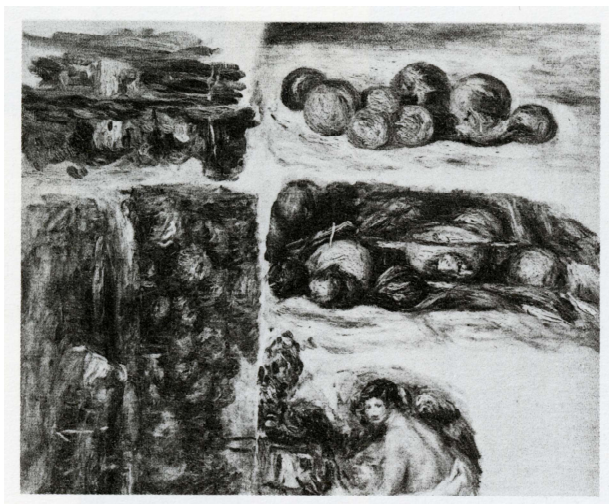


Fig. 9. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Two Still Lifes, Two Landscapes, Nude*, 1916, oil on canvas, 25 5/8 x 19 11/16 in. (65 x 50 cm), which was later cut and dispersed; photograph by Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, ca. 1920–1922, published in Marc Elder and Albert André, *L'Atelier de Renoir* (Paris: Bernheim-Jeune, 1931), no. 576



Fig. 10. Detail of the right side of the bottom tacking margin with arrows marking the locations of tack holes, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887)

Over the years, Renoir produced numerous multi-sketch canvases depicting an array of motifs—landscape, still life, and figural studies— haphazardly arranged on the picture plane and often separated by borders of white ground (Fig. 9). With financial considerations in mind, Renoir allowed dealers to cut down many of these canvases in order to sell the sketches as individual works.^{8,9} Despite the existence of these small cut-down sketches, paint from the picture plane of the Nelson-Atkins study does not continue onto the tacking edges (Fig. 10), and there is no clear physical evidence that *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* originated from a larger canvas. The canvas is stretched across a modern strainer with a depth of only one centimeter, and partial tacking margins that range in size from 1.1 to 1.7 centimeters have an uneven, irregularly cut edge. Former tack holes (now filled with lining adhesive) indicate that the canvas was once stretched across a support of greater depth (see Fig. 10). Strong cusping is evident on the painting's left edge. Although its current dimensions are close in size to that of a standard-format no. 2 *marine* stretcher (24 x 14 cm), turned horizontally, no canvas stamp was apparent on the canvas reverse prior to the 1979 wax-lining (Fig. 11).¹⁰

Renoir frequently signed and added final touches to the outer edges of his works, even years later, before selling them through his dealer.¹¹ The possibility of later additions by the artist himself cannot be ruled out for the Nelson-Atkins sketch, as there are paint strokes on the bottom edge, somewhat broadly applied, that lie on top of cracks (Fig. 12). When these areas are examined with ultraviolet (UV) radiation, there is no differential UV fluorescence between these potential later additions and the surrounding original paint (Fig. 13).

Although Renoir is known to have wiped and removed paint with a cloth,¹² leaving some paint in the interstices and only a hint of wash on the upper points of the ground texture, many of the thin paint layers on the Nelson-Atkins sketch have a disrupted, skinned appearance. Bright white dots of exposed ground result from a past solvent cleaning. The signature, estimated to be purple paint, is overcleaned and abraded (Fig. 14).¹³ Vestiges of beige washes near the overcleaned signature also appear abraded, and thin washes toning the white ground in other areas may have been similarly affected.

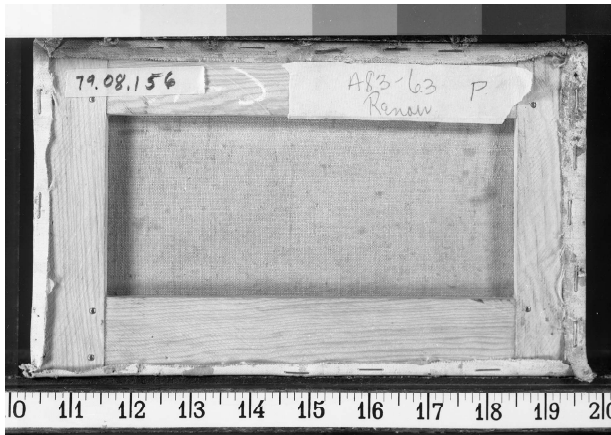


Fig. 11. Photograph from 1979 showing the verso of *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887)

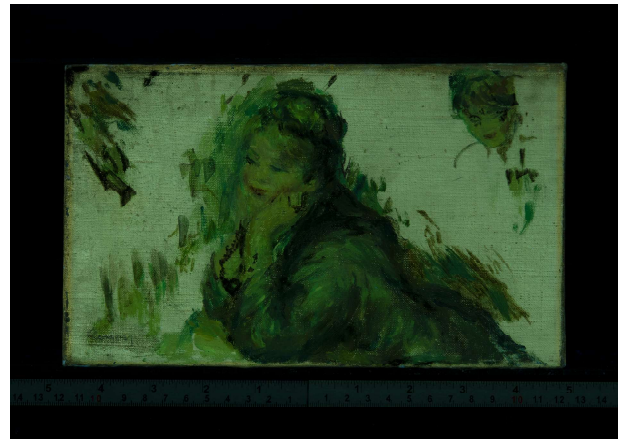


Fig. 13. Ultraviolet-induced visible fluorescence photograph, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887)

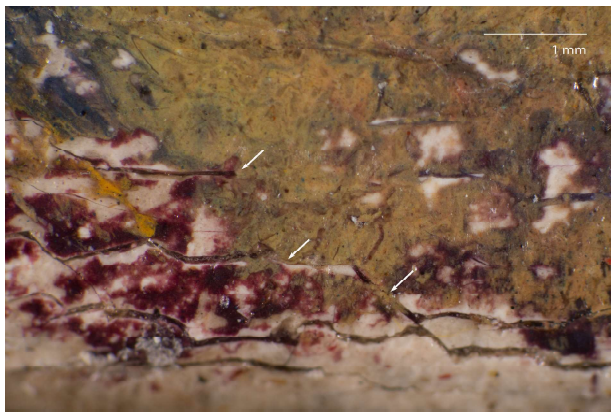


Fig. 12. Photomicrograph of the bottom edge, *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887), showing yellow-orange paint that covers cracks, located below the central figure's shoulder

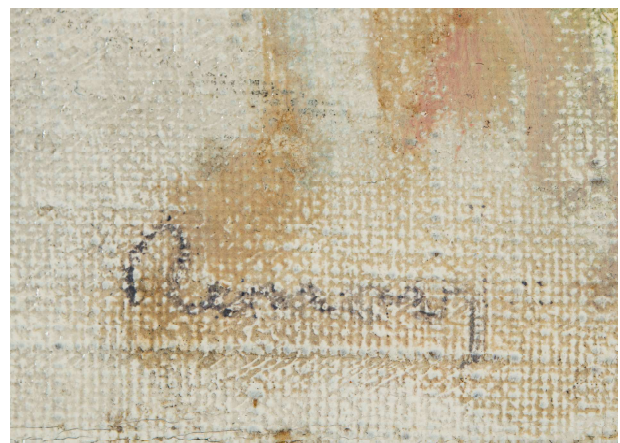


Fig. 14. Detail of the signature on the lower left of *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* (ca. 1887)

The lined painting is structurally sound with few age cracks. The ground layer is quite thin on the uppermost points of the canvas weave, and today its color is influenced by the underlying canvas, now somewhat darkened by the wax-based adhesive of the lining (see Fig. 6). Residues of discolored natural resin varnish are visible with the stereomicroscope, and the current synthetic varnish is discolored. Retouching, applied in 1979 to strengthen forms and integrate missing washes, appears dark and non-fluorescing in the UV-visible induced fluorescence photograph of Figure 13.

Mary Schafer
October 2021

Notes

1. A similar diagonal texture has been identified in the ground layer of the following Renoir paintings: *Young Woman Sewing* (1879; Art Institute of Chicago), *Blonde Bather* (1881; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA), and *Seascape* (1879; Art Institute of Chicago). See Kelly Keegan, "Cat. 7. Young Woman Sewing, 1879: Technical Report," in *Renoir Paintings and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago*, ed. Gloria Groom and Jill Shaw (Art Institute of Chicago, 2014), para. 30, https://publications.artic.edu/renoir/reader/paintingsanddrawings/section/135630/135630_anch Kelly Keegan, "Cat. 8. Seascape, 1879: Technical Report," in *Renoir Paintings and Drawings at the Art*

- Institute of Chicago*, para. 22, https://publications.artic.edu/renoir/reader/paintingsanddrawings/section/135636/135636_anchor.
2. No analysis has been undertaken of *Study for "Young Girls Playing Volant"* to confirm the ground composition or its layered structure.
 3. Although this diagonal texture has been linked to commercially primed canvases used by the artist, its irregular application is noteworthy, as Renoir occasionally modified commercial ground layers with selectively applied preparation layers. See Kelly Keegan and Inge Fiedler, "Rediscovering Renoir: Materials and Technique in the Paintings of Pierre-Auguste Renoir at the Art Institute of Chicago," *AIC Paintings Specialty Group: Postprints 28; Papers Presented at the 43rd Annual Meeting, Miami* (Washington, DC: American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2015), 12.
 4. For a discussion of the connections between the Nelson-Atkins sketch, a related preparatory study, and the finished painting, see the accompanying catalogue entry by Danielle Hampton Cullen.
 5. Finely painted, blue contour lines are evident on the proper right cheek of the upper right face and the upper shoulders and edge of the central female's skirt. When the painting is examined with a stereomicroscope, retouching is also present in these areas, making the blue lines appear to reside on top of subsequent paint applications.
 6. Jean Renoir, *Renoir, My Father*, trans. Randolph and Dorothy Weaver (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 386.
 7. Albert André and Marc Elder, *Renoir's Atelier = L'atelier de Renoir* (San Francisco: Alan Wofsy Fine Arts, 1989), 1:XLIX.
 8. The contents of Renoir's studio were published in 1931 by Bernheim-Jeune, and the photographs document a number of multi-sketch canvases before they were cut down. Early photographs of these larger canvases can be viewed alongside the present-day, cut-down sketches in Martha Lucy and John House, *Renoir in the Barnes Foundation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 54, 55, 61.
 9. For a nuanced discussion of Renoir's conflicted view of the sale of his sketches, see Lucy and House, *Renoir in the Barnes Foundation*, 62.
 10. David Bomford, Jo Kirby, John Leighton, and Ashok Roy, *Art in the Making: Impressionism* (London: Yale University Press, 1991), 46. See 1979 photograph of the painting verso and accompanying treatment report in the Nelson-Atkins conservation file, no. 2015.13.21.
 11. Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George, and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The Hidden Techniques of the Impressionists* (Milan: Skira, 2008), 144. For the cut-down sketches in particular, Renoir was asked to sign and "finish the edges, in order to transform them into [complete] paintings." Albert André, *Renoir* (Paris: Georges Crès et Cie, 1928), 49.
 12. Kelly Keegan, "Cat. 9. Acrobats at the Cirque Fernando (Francisca and Angelina Wartenberg), 1879: Technical Report," in *Renoir Paintings and Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago*, para. 40, <https://publications.artic.edu/renoir/reader/paintin>
 13. Although the signature is abraded, the study appears to have been signed with paint instead of marked with the imprint of a signature stamp. Detail photographs of signature stamps on several Renoir paintings can be found in Lucy and House, *Renoir in the Barnes Foundation*, 60.

Provenance

Probably with the artist, Paris and Les Collettes, near Cagnes-sur-Mer, France, 1890–December 3, 1919;

Probably inherited by the artist's family, Les Collettes, near Cagnes-sur-Mer, France, 1919–October 1922 [1];

Probably by descent to one of the artist's sons, Pierre Renoir (1885–1952), Jean Renoir (1894–1979), or Claude Renoir (1901–1969), Paris and Les Collettes, near Cagnes-sur-Mer, France, 1922;

George N. Richard (1882–1972), New York, by January 20, 1965–February 1972 [2];

Inherited by his widow, Bernice Richard (née Rougeot, 1920–1989), 1972–February 10, 1976 [3];

Purchased from Richard, through Knoedler and Co., New York, no. CA 9756, by Marion (née Helzberg, 1931–2013) and Henry (1922–2019) Bloch, Shawnee Mission, KS, February 10, 1976–June 15, 2015;

Given by Henry W. and Marion H. Bloch to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, 2015.

Notes

[1] Distribution of Renoir's paintings among his three sons did not occur until October 1922, a few months after the youngest son, Claude, came of age. Accordingly, an itemized inventory of Renoir's paintings titled "Partage par lots" was drawn up, presumably with an indication of which painting went to which son. The "Partage par lots" is undated; however, a typed letter dated August 8, 1922 from Pierre Renoir to his cousin Eugène suggests that it was drawn up in October 1922; see "The Unknown Renoir: The Man, The Husband, The Father, The Artist," Heritage Auctions, New York, September 19, 2013, lot 89007. Unfortunately, this document is not currently accessible to researchers.

[2] George N. Richard often bought and sold works through Knoedler, New York. Knoedler made an inventory and appraisal of Richard's art collection on January 21, 1965. The painting appears as "*Femme Accoudée*, 83," with a short description of its location and value. See appraisal, 1965, Richard, George N., Series VI.A, box 1091, folder 4, M. Knoedler and Co. records, approximately 1848–1971, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. A label on the verso of the painting reads "A83-63 Renoir" in red ballpoint and "P" in blue ballpoint. This number might be Richard's inventory number and may indicate that the painting was the 83rd item purchased by him and that it was bought in 1963.

[3] See correspondence from Jack Tanzer, Knoedler and Co., New York, to Henry Bloch, Shawnee Mission, KS, January 9, 1975, NAMA curatorial files.

Related Works

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Etude de personnages*, ca. 1885, drawing, illustrated in Guy-Patrice et Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: Catalogue Raisonné des Tableaux, Pastels, Dessins et Aquarelles* (Paris: Éditions Bernheim-Jeune, 2007), no. 1479, p. 2:495.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Étude pour Jeunes filles jouant au volant*, ca. 1887, oil on canvas, 9 10/16 x 12 16/16 in. (24.5 x 33 cm), illustrated in *Impressionist and Modern Art Part Two* (New York: Sotheby's, November 3, 2005), 45.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Jeunes filles jouant au volant*, oil on canvas, ca. 1887, 21 1/2 x 25 5/8 in. (54.6 x 65.2 cm.), illustrated in *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* (New York: Christie's, May 6, 2014), 64.

Exhibitions

The Bloch Collection, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, June–August 1982, no cat.

Manet to Matisse: Impressionist Masters from the Marion and Henry Bloch Collection, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, June 9–September 9, 2007, no. 16, as *Woman Leaning on Her Elbows (Femme accoudée)*.

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