

Evocation of Love

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

1850-1855

G354



- This painting belonged to James J. Hill, the railroad magnate from Minnesota.
- James J. Hill collection of European painting forms the basis of the MIA's 19th century holdings.
- In 1881, Mr. Hill commenced in earnest to collect paintings by members of the Barbizon School whose ennobled sentiment and love of nature struck a responsive chord in his heart.
- Mr. Hill owned no less than twenty-two paintings by Corot which represent the entire range of the artist, demonstrating both the architectural and the tender, poetic sides of his genius.
- While Corot's figure subjects were sometimes placed in pastoral settings, these were mostly studio pieces, drawn from the live model.

About the Artist:

Camille Corot was born in Paris July 26, 1796. His family was well-to-do bourgeois people-his father was a wigmaker and his mother a milliner and whatever may have been the experience of some of his artistic colleagues, he never, throughout his life, was in need of money. His parents ran their business well and made good investments. Corot was educated at Rouen and later apprenticed to a draper. He hated commercial life yet he faithfully remained in it until he was twenty-six, when his father at last consented to his adopting the profession of art. He received a yearly allowance of 1500 francs which adequately financed his new career, studio, materials, and travel for the rest of his life.

During the period when Corot devoted himself to art, landscape painting was on the upswing and generally divided into two camps: Historical landscape by Neoclassicists in Southern Europe representing idealized views of real and fancied sites with people of ancient, mythological, and biblical figures or realistic landscape, more common in Northern Europe, which was largely faithful to actual topography, architecture, flora and figures of peasants.

Corot followed the well-established pattern of French painters who went to Italy to study the masters of the Italian Renaissance. His first trip to Italy from 1825 to 1828 was a highly formative and productive one, during which he completed over 200 drawings and 150 paintings.

Following his trip to Italy, Corot focused on preparing large landscapes for presentation at the Salon. Several of his Salon paintings were adaptations of his Italian oil sketches reworked in the studio by adding imagined, formal elements consistent with Neoclassical principles. His first Salon entry, *View at Narni* (1827),



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where he took his quick, natural study of a ruin of a Roman aqueduct in dusty bright sun and transformed it into a falsely idyllic pastoral setting with giant shade trees and green lawns, a conversion meant to appeal to the Neoclassical jurors. Corot exhibited one portrait and several landscapes at the Salon in 1831 and 1833. His reception by the critics at the Salon was cool and Corot decided to return to Italy, having failed to satisfy them with his Neoclassical themes.

Throughout the 1840's, Corot continued to have his troubles with the critics (many of his works were flatly rejected for salon exhibition). By 1845 he was pronounced to leader in the modern school of landscape painting and in 1846, the French government decorated him with the cross of the Legion d'Honneur and in 1848 he was awarded a second class medal at the Salon. After the Revolution of 1848, Corot was admitted as a member of the Salon jury.

Corot was the leading painter of the Barbizon school of France in the mid-nineteenth century. He is a pivotal figure in landscape painting. His work simultaneously references the Neo-Classical tradition and anticipates the plein-air innovations of Impressionism. In addition to landscapes, he produced a number of figure paintings. He painted about fifty portraits, mostly of family and friends. He also painted thirteen reclining nudes.

Compared to the Impressionists who came later, Corot's palette is restrained, dominated with browns and blacks ("forbidden colors" among Impressionists) along with dark and silvery green. He had an aversion to shocking color. He was more of a harmonist than a colorist and his compositions seductive just because of their simplicity of color.

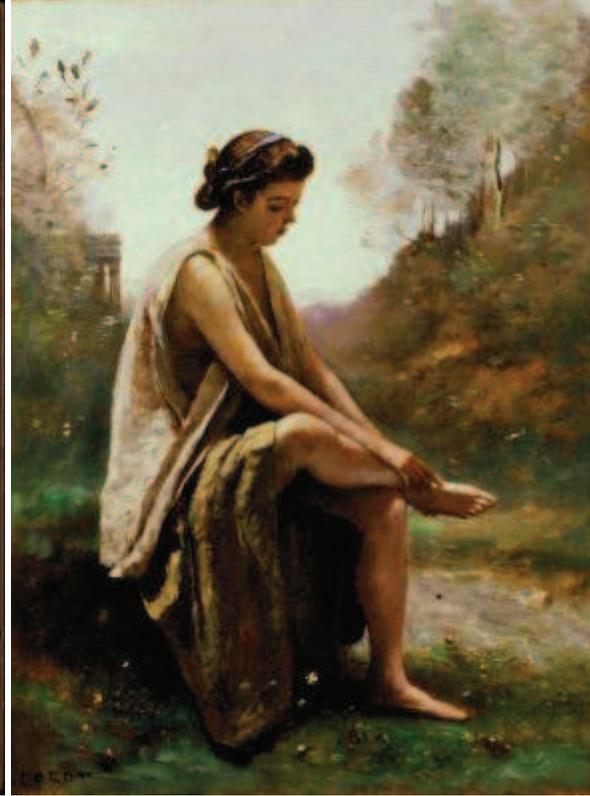
In later life, Corot's studio was filled with students, models, friends, collectors, and dealers. Dealers snapped up his works and his prices were often above 4000 francs per paintings. With his success, Corot gave generously of his money and time. He gave money to the poor of Paris, under siege by the Prussians. He donated 10,000 francs to the widow of Millet in support of her children. He also financially supported the upkeep of a center for children in Paris. He remained a humble and modest man and believed "men should not puff themselves up with pride, whether they are emperors adding this or that province to their empires or painter who gain a reputation".

Camille Corot died in Paris, February 22, 1875.

In his long and productive life, Corot painted over 3000 paintings.



Peasant Girl at the Spring
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The Wounded Eurydice
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Springtime of Life
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