Jean Hector Henri GAMBART

A Biographical Sketch by Dirk HR Spennemann
Contents

CONTENTS ....................................................................................................................... 2
BIOGRAPHY ..................................................................................................................... 1
   ART STUDY .................................................................................................................... 1
   EXHIBITING IN THE SALON ....................................................................................... 2
   RESIDENCES ............................................................................................................... 2
   TRAVEL ......................................................................................................................... 3
   SALES AND COMMISSIONS ..................................................................................... 4
   ŒUVRE ......................................................................................................................... 5
   SUJETS ......................................................................................................................... 6
      Signatures ................................................................................................................ 6
   ITEMS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS ............................................................................ 7
CATALOGUE .................................................................................................................. 8
   CHRONOLOGICAL SYNOPSIS ................................................................................... 22
ENDNOTES .................................................................................................................... 23
SOURCES ..................................................................................................................... 27
This document provides a compilation of all information that could be obtained on the minor French genre painter Jean Henri Gambart. This study provides a biographical sketch, limited in its scope by the paucity of data, as well as a catalogue of all works that could be identified from the literature as well as from a search on published auction results. Given that Gambart was a minor painter and not well collected, information on him is very limited. Apart from brief biographic entries in art directories, no biographical research has been carried out to date. This is first such study on the artist.

**Biography**

Jean Hector Henri Gambart was born on 1 April 1854 in Péronne in the Picardie (Dept. Somme).[1] Hector seems to have been a silent name as he always signed his art as Jean-Henri or, more commonly, Henri-Jean Gambart.[2] He died in 1891 in ?Paris aged 37 or 38.[3] At this point in time we do not know anything about Gambart's family or upbringing. There are a number of Gambart on record in the Picardie and adjoining areas from the early seventeenth century onwards.

**Art Study**

Jean Henri Gambart is listed as a student of the Académie Julian in Paris for the years 1876 to 1878,[4] He was a pupil principally of Jules-Joseph Lefebvre (1836-1911) and Gustave Boulanger (1824-1888) both conservative, traditionalist painters with an international reputation.[5] Both taught as visiting professors at the Académie Julian. While Gambart also studied under Charles-Alexandre Crauk (1819–1905),[6] he publicly only identified himself with Boulanger and Lefebvre.[7] The Académie Julian was a series of studios that provided informal and low-fee instruction—as opposed to the state-sponsored École des Beaux Arts which also required rigorous entrance exams. But by many the attendance of the Académie Julian was seen as an entry ticket into the École des Beaux Arts providing the technical education that allowed students to pass its rigorous entrance exams.[8] Moreover, most of the visiting professors to the Académie Julian were on the selection panels of the Salon, so that the works of capable students had a very good chance of being hung.

Much of the study at the Académie Julian was based on real models with an emphasis on academic painting and measured compositions. Students were allowed to paint and work much on their own—under guidance, but much less regimented than at other art schools. At the Académie Julian students were set weekly sketch compositions, judged on Saturdays, which were to be painted from imagination, with historic, allegorical and biblical motifs predominating. Five times
a year each student had to exhibit and compete in a concours divided into five categories.[9]

We do not know what Gambart did between the end of his studies in 1878 and his first exhibition in the Salon in 1881 (see below). Given the subject matter of several of his paintings (p. 3), we can assume that he travelled to the south of France and painted there.

Exhibiting in the Salon

Gambart was a traditional genre painter at a time when Impressionism and Modernism were new and exciting art forms. Gambart’s exhibition debut in the Paris Salon of the ‘Société des Artistes Français’ occurred on 2 May 1881 when he exhibited the painting Petite Mendiane (nº 1). Even though each Salon had well over 1000 entries hung each year, not every submission was accepted. Rather, they were selected by a panel of about a dozen judges.[10] Acceptance of a work was automatic only for the prize winners of the previous year (but not to those who received honourable mentions).

In the Salon of the following year, 1882, Gambart exhibited two paintings, Souvenir de Menton (nº 2) and une Famille pauvre à Bagnères Louchon (nº 2). For the latter he received an Honourable mention. As a result, that painting was included in the triennial Exhibition Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1883 [11] and eventually acquired by the Museum of Amiens from Gambart’s estate in 1892.[12]

Gambart seems to have paused exhibiting in the salon of the Société des Artistes Français between 1883 to 1886.[13] His whereabouts during that period are so far largely unknown. It is also unclear why he would have stopped exhibiting at a time when he had his first, albeit limited success. He seems to have travelled for at least some of the time (see below).

From 1887 on Gambart exhibited regularly in the salon of Société des Artistes Français,’ with paintings in 1887 (Au soleil, nº 4), two paintings in 1888 (Un coin du port, nº 5, and Mourant dans une étable, nº 6), 1889 (Dernier baiser, nº 7), 1890 (Sous le porche de Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois, nº 8) and in the year of his death in 1891 (Petit–Jean, nº 9).[14] His 1890 entry received an Honourable Mention.[15]

In 1889 he joined the Société des Artistes Français, then very much an establishment institution, and remained a member until his death.[16]

Residences

Some of the salon catalogues provide information regarding a painter’s residence. According these publications, Gambart lived in 1881 in Paris in a five-storey apartment building at 16 Rue Saint-Romain, VIème arrondissement,[17] while in 1882 he lived with a (monsieur?) Hardy at 36 Rue de Cherche Midi, also VIème arrondissement.[18] We have no residential information for the period 1883 to 1886 but know that he stayed in Menton in late 1883.[19] From 1887 until his
death in 1891 he is on record to have lived at 28 Rue Marbeuf, a five-storey apartment building off the Champs Elysees, in the VIIIème arrondissement. [20]

![Two of Henri Jean Gambart’s residences in Paris](image)

**Travel**

Some of the subjects of the paintings, as entered in the salon, provide some locational context by virtue of their title. This indicates that Gambart painted in the Somme (n° 10), the Auvergne (n° 6, n° 9), at the French Riviera (Menton, n° 3, n° 5) and in the Haute Garonne (n° 2). It is likely that he would have stayed at each location for some time.

Documentary evidence for that period of Gambart’s life is sparse. On record we have Gambart as staying in September 1883 in Menton. [22]
Sales and Commissions

As many artists of the day, Gambart continually tried to convince the Minister for the Arts to acquire for the National Collection some of his works which had been exhibited in the Salon. Apart from success in the Salons, an acquisition of a painting for the national collection meant an honour, and a visible sign of success that would enhance a painter’s reputation—and make him or her ‘collectible’ in the eyes of the general public. A file held in the French National Archives demonstrates that he tried to do so for Une famille pauvre à Bagnères de Louchon (nº 2) in 1883,[23] stressing that the work not only had been awarded an honourable mention in the salon of 1882, but that it was also exhibited in the triennial exhibition in 1883 and that he would accept any offer the Minister would seem fit. This was politely declined.[24] He tried again indirectly, via the director of the Museum of Fine Arts, with Au soleil (nº 4) in 1887,[25] and directly with Mourant dans une
étable, Auvergne (n° 6) in 1888,[26] which turned into a protracted correspondence, involving a separate petition by a A.Duput of the Court of Appeals in Amiens, who stressed Gambart’s importance to the region.[27] Further attempts were made with Dernier baiser, Auvergne (n° 9) in 1889,[28] and Sous le porche de Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois (n° 2) in 1890.[29] Gambart did not petition the minister for the acquisition of his 1891 entry in the Salon, ‘Petit-Jean’ (n° 9). It may well be that he was too ill to do so, for he died sometime during that year.[30]

Some of these petitions were endorsed by judges. Gambart’s teacher Jules Lefebvre commented on some of these petitions (n° 6, n° 7). Gambart’s petition for the acquisition of Dernier baiser (n° 7), for example, Lefebvre annotated with “Mr Gambart is a very interesting artist in all aspects, it merits the benevolence of the Minister for the Fine Arts.”[31] Despite the recommendation, Gambart’s petition was unsuccessful.

We are uninformed whether he was given any formal governmental commissions, but it seems quite unlikely in view of his lack of presence in the national collection.[32]

Œuvre

Gambart’s œuvre includes mainly oils but also some watercolours. The following is the his œuvre as far as could be established at the time of writing.[33] It was compiled from the catalogues of the salons, museum information and auction catalogues. Much of Gambart’s œuvre is undated. The items are set out chronologically, and where no date is known, alphabetically. Each item is described in the catalogue section.

1881  Petite mendiante
1881  Une famille pauvre à Bagnères de Louchon
1882  Souvenir de Menton
1887  Au soleil
1888  Un coin du port, Menton
1888  Mourant dans une étable, Auvergne
1889  Dernier baiser, Auvergne
1890  Sous le porche de Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois
1891  Petit-Jean
18xx  Pèlerinage au tombeau de Saint-Valéry (sur-Somme)
18xx  Femme à la fontaine
18xx  L’heure du thé
18xx  Le concert privé
18xx  La Parlotte sous Louis XV
18xx  The Tease
18xx  Drawing Room interior with couples conversing
18xx  Young girl with white veil
18xx  Horseman Resting
18xx  Playful kitten

Some of Gambart’s work is quite large, with Pèlerinage au tombeau de Saint-Valéry (n° 10) measuring 4 x 3 metres, and une famille pauvre à Bagnères
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

*de Louchon* (n° 3) measuring 3 x 2 metres. Both seem to have remained in Gambart’s possession until his death, as both were part of his estate and donated to the Musée d’Amiens in 1892.

**Sujets**

As a genre painter, Gambart’s range of subjects was limited. He either painted historical period scenes in court settings of Louis XV (n° 13, n° 14, n° 15), allegorical scenes (n° 10) or contemporary social realism of working class and especially poverty. The latter theme was explored with *une famille pauvre à Bagnères Louchon* (1882, n° 2); the death of the mother of a family in stable in *mourant dans une étable* (1888, n° 6), a group of poor asking for alms at the steps of St.Germain in *sous le porche de Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois* (1890, n° 8), and a little beggar boy with torn clothes and shoes and hat in hand in *Petit–Jean* (1891, n° 9). It is possibly not surprising that both Honourable mentions which he attracted, were for social realism paintings (n° 2, n° 8).

Genre paintings were largely passé at the time, with the established Société des Artistes splitting in 1889. A breakaway group formed the Société des Beaux-Arts and set up their own salons commencing on the Champs-du-Mars a fortnight after the Salon of the Société des Artistes. The fact that Gambart joined the Société des Artistes at precisely that moment suggests that he identified with the traditional painters and threw his weight, as little as it would have been, behind the ‘establishment’—and presumably thus ensured the benevolence and patronage of his mentor Jules Lefebrve.

**Signatures**

We have in hand a number of examples of his signature. On his art he signed only as Jean-Henri or Henri-Jean Gambart.[34]

Signature Petition 1883

[Signature image]

Signature Petition 1890

[Signature image]

n° 9 (1891)
Items in Public Collections

Given that Gambart was born in Péronne in the Picardie, it is not surprising that the Museum of Amiens, capital of the Department Somme, owns two of his paintings (n° 2, n° 10). That collection bought many paintings that received prizes or honourable mentions in the salons. Both Gambart items, however, were donated by his estate in 1892.[35] A search of French and Belgian museums databases did not turn up any other examples of his work in public hand.
The following is a catalogue of all works by Gambart that could be identified at the time of writing. Many of those that were exhibited in the Salon could not be located and thus no images obtained as only some of the Salon catalogues were illustrated. Since photographic reproduction was still very expensive at the time, much of the art was illustrated in the form of line drawings. Where these are the only examples in hand, they are reproduced here. As the following example shows, however, care should be taken not to rely on too much of the detail.

An example of the representation of paintings in the salon catalogues. Catalogue image left, original painting right (n° 9)

The catalogue contains three items (n° 17, n° 18, n° 19) that have been found in annual auction sale summaries as attributed to the French nineteenth century painter ‘Gambert.’ No such painter can be found in Bénézit or other art dictionaries.[36] It is clearly a miss-interpretation. The subjects appear more like those of Gambart than the other option for a misspelling, the German painter Otto Gammert (1842-1924). They have thus been added to the present catalogue as possible attributions.
image unavailable at the time of writing

n° 1  1881  Petite mendiane

Oil/canvas
Collection  [37]
n° 2  1881  Une famille pauvre à Bagnères de Louchon

Oil/canvas
287 x 196 cm
Musee d'Amiens  [38]
nº 3  1882  Souvenir de Menton

Oil/canvas
Collection  [39]

image unavailable
at the time of writing

nº 4  1887  Au soleil

Oil/canvas
Collection  [40]
n° 5 1888  *Un coin du port, Menton*

Oil/canvas
Collection [41]

n° 6 1888  *Mourant dans une étable, Auvergne*

Oil/canvas
Collection [42]
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

image unavailable at the time of writing

nº 7 1889  *Dernier baiser, Auvergne*

Oil/canvas
Collection [43]
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

(nº 8) 1890 Sous le porche de Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois

Oil/canvas
Collection [44]
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

n° 9  

1891  

Petit-Jean

Oil/canvas 145 x 75 cm
Private Collection  [45]
n° 10 18xx Pèlerinage au tombeau de Saint-Valéry (sur-Somme)

Oil/canvas 400 x 307
Musee d'Amiens [46]
n° 11  18xx  *Femme à la fontaine*

Oil/canvas 92 x 56 cm
Collection [47]

n° 12  18xx  *L'heure du thé*

Watercolour & gouache on paper
38 x 46 cm
Collection [48]
n° 13  18xx  Le concert privé

Oil/canvas 41 x 33 cm
Collection [49]
nº 14  18xx  *La Parlotte sous Louis XV*

Oil/canvas 50 x 61 cm
Private Collection [50]
n° 15  18xx  The Tease

('The Playful Kitten')
Oil/canvas 38.1 x 46.4 cm
Private Collection [51]

image unavailable
at the time of writing

n° 16  18xx  Drawing Room interior with couples conversing

Oil/canvas 37 x 46 cm
Private Collection [52]
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

image unavailable
at the time of writing

\(\text{n° 17} \quad 18xx \quad \text{Young girl with white veil}\)

Oil/canvas 51 x 41 cm
Private Collection [53]

image unavailable
at the time of writing

\(\text{n° 18} \quad 18xx \quad \text{Horseman Resting}\)

Oil/canvas 35 x 27 cm
Private Collection [54]

image unavailable
at the time of writing

\(\text{n° 19} \quad 18xx \quad \text{Playful kitten}\)

Oil/canvas 38 x 46 cm
Private Collection
# Chronological Synopsis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1854, 1 Apr</td>
<td>Born in Péronne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-78</td>
<td>Studies at the Académie Julian in Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Lives at 16 Rue Saint-Romain, Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881, 2 May</td>
<td>First exhibit in the Salon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Lives at 36 Rue de Cherche Midi, Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Exhibits in the Salon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Painting shown in the National Exhibition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883, Sep</td>
<td>Lives in Menton, Riviera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887-91</td>
<td>Lives at 28 Rue Marbeuf, Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Exhibits in the Salon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Exhibits in the Salon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Exhibits in the Salon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Joins the Société des Artistes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Exhibits in the Salon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Exhibits in the Salon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Dies in Paris ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

Endnotes

© Dirk HR Spennemann, Albury 2013 (text and illustrations, unless otherwise specified in the endnotes.

Bibliographical reference:

Acknowledgments:
I am indebted to the following for kind assistance in providing information on the painter of that museum's holdings of his works: Nathalie Albin-Portier (Archives National de France, Paris); Gillian Currie (National Gallery of Australia); Catherine Renaux (Musée d’Amiens, Amiens); Janell Snape (Fine Art Department, Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco)

1 On occasion spelled ‘Gambard’ (cf. de la Chavignerie & Auvray 1887, p. 223).—His family relationship (if any) to the Belgian-born British art dealer Jean Joseph Ernest Théodore Gambart (1814–1902) is unclear (see Maas 1975), even though the geographical region is correct.—Date of birth based on database entries in the Musée d’Amiens.

2 With variations, such as Henrijean Gambart (nº 1).

3 Based on data in the Musée d’Amiens, he seems to have had relations living in Veune or named Veune.

4 Fehrer 1989, Appendix.—Some of the archives of the Académie Julian have been found. While the material relating to the women is missing, the material relating to male students is curated by the National Archives of France, Fonds de l’Académie Julian (1890-1932). Série ‘As’ Archives d’Associations 63 AS 1 à 9. While the bulk of the filed relates to a period after which Gambart had left, and index volume lists all male painters, including those of earlier periods.
http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/chan/chan/fonds/edi/aras/aras.htm. That material could not be accessed for this study.

5 Weisberg 1999.


7 See text below signature lines on correspondence with the Minister for Fine Arts. File ‘Henri, Jean Gambart, peintre’ Archives Nationales de France file F/21/4310.

8 The Académie Julian was so successful that it continually expanded had several studios operating in parallel, with separate studios for men and women (Fehrer 1989b). Given the period of Gambart’s study at the Académie Julian, he would have studied at one of the following three studios for men: Passages des Panoramas at 27 Galerie Montmartre, Ième arrondissement; 1 Rue d’Uzes, IIème arrondissement, or 48 Rue Faubourg, St Denis, Xème arrondissement. Given his residences, the latter is the least likely.

9 The categories were portrait study, full-length figure of a woman, female torso, full-length figure of a man and male torso (Zubans 1995; see also Homer 1969).

10 De Chennevieres 1883, vol. IV p. 100.

11 Dumas 1883b, p. xvii nº 305.

12 Pers. comm.. Catherine Renaux, Musée d’Amiens.
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

13 Not included in any of the catalogues for the Salons of 1883 (Dumas 1883); 1884 (Dumas 1884; Anon 1884); 1885 (Dumas 1885); and 1886 (Anon. 1886).

14 Curville 1980,p. 299; Thieme 1920, p. 140.

15 Sheldon 1890.

16 Anon. 1889, p. 85 n° 1109; 1890b, p. 79 n° 999; 1891b, p. XLIII.—Not listed as member: Anon. 1881, p. 37 n° 938.; Anon. 1882, p. 97 n° 1112-3; Anon. 1888b, p. 86 n° 1064-5; 1887b, p. 83 n° 982.

17 Anon. 1881, p. 37 n° 938.

18 Anon. 1882, p. 97 n° 1112-3.—The Rue Saint-Romain ends in the Rue de Cherche Midi.— 36 Rue de Cherche Midi is now a modern office building.


20 Anon. 1887b, p. 83, n° 982; 1888b, p. 86 n° 1064-5; 1889, p. 85 n° 1109; 1890b, p. 79 n° 999; 1891b, p. 59 n° 675.—Correspondence in the French National Archives shows that he lived there at least since 2 May 1887 (File ‘Henri, Jean Gambart, peintre’ Archives Nationales de France file F/21/4310).


25 Letter Gambart to Kaempfer, Director of the Museum for Fine Arts, dated Paris, 2 May 1887.— Same letter on official stamped (taxed) paper sent on 5 May 1887. File ‘Henri, Jean Gambart, peintre’ Archives Nationales de France file F/21/4310.


30 Given that all petitions were written in April or May, it is possible that he did not live that long, or that he was seriously ill at the time.


32 None of his paintings were acquired for the National Collection: Adheemar & Lethère 1954.

33 This study was concluded in January 2005.
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

34 With variations, such as Henrijean Gambart. (n° 1).
36 Bénézit 1976.
38 Image © Musée d’Amiens.—Signed lower right.—Salon 1882 (Société des artistes français): Anon. 1882, p. 97 n° 1112; Dumas 1882, p. xxxvi n° 1112 (Une famille pauvre). —Mention Honorable.—Exposition nationale des Beaux-Arts 15 September 1883: Dumas 1883b, p. xviii n° 305 (Une famille pauvre à Louchon).—de la Chavignerie & Auväy 1887, p. 223.— Bénézit 1948, v. 4, p. 601; Bénézit 1976, vol. 5 p. 840.—Delambre 1899, n° 122.—Anon 1911, n° 155.—Donated in 1892 to the Museum by Gambart, Veuve. Also referred to as “Une famille pauvre à Louchon” (including by himself).
40 Salon 1887 (Société des artistes français): Anon 1887, p. 18 n° 982; Anon. 1887b, p. 83 n° 982.
41 Salon 1888 (Société des artistes français): Anon 1888, p. 19 n° 1065; Anon 1888b, p. 86 n° 1065.
42 Salon 1888 (Société des artistes français): Anon 1888, p. 19 n° 1064; p. 213 (ill.); Anon 1888b, p. 86 n° 1064.
43 Salon 1889 (Société des artistes français): Anon. 1889, p. 85 n° 1109.
44 Salon 1890 (Société des artistes français): Anon 1890, p. 18 n° 999; p. 223 (ill.); Anon. 1890b, p. 79 n° 999.—Honourable Mention.—Sheldon 1890, [xii] and plate facing p. 76.
45 Signed lower right.—Salon 1891 (Société des artistes français): Anon. 1891, n° 675; p. 230 (ill.); Anon 1891b, p. 59 n° 675.
46 Image © Musée d’Amiens.—Bénézit 1976, vol. 5 p. 840.—Delambre 1899, n° 121.—Anon 1911, n° 154.—Donated in 1892 to the Museum by Gambart, Veuve.
47 Signed lower right.
Jean Hector Henri Gambart

52  AB Stockholms Auktionsverk. Auction 4 December 2002, nº 1901. Catalogue estimate Swedish Krona 20,000–25,000, Sold for Swedish Krona 16,000 (Source: Hislop 2004, p. 758).—The painter is identifies as ‘Gambert.’


54  Messrs Grindel, Boscher, Drouot, Rive-Gauche Salle 12, 3 December 1979 sold for Francs 1,700 (Meyer 1980, p. 764).—The painter is identifies as ‘Gambert.’
Sources


Jean Hector Henri Gambart


Jean Hector Henri Gambart

FIND