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A Forgotten Gustave Courbet Painting Discovered in French Museum

Three works were thought to be fakes, two are now attributed.

Amah-Rose Abrams, March 9, 2017



du Lac Léman (1876).

Gustave Courbet *Vue*

The Musée du Vieux Granville in Normandy, France has authenticated a work by Realist master Gustave Courbet that has been languishing in its archives since 1945. *Vue du Lac Léman* (1876), as well as two other paintings attributed to Courbet, had been previously pronounced fakes and put away in the museum's storage, until a local curator spotted them.

Alexandra Jalaber, who works as a curator with all the municipal museums in the city of Granville, was the first to re-examine the painting.

By [Sarah Cascone](#), Jan 30, 2017

"I was preparing a document on the history of the museum with my team," she recounted to Le Parisien. "The picture was in a locker, in storage, in the dark. I could not see it properly, but it remained in my memory as really beautiful."

It was long believed that the museum held three paintings by Courbet in its collection—bequeathed to the institution by a local resident in 1892—that were either forgeries, or simply misattributed to Courbet in place of one of his assistants.

By [Chloe Leonida](#), Dec 28, 2016

In 1995, an expert wrote off all three paintings as forgeries, says Jalaber. "One was also a blatant fake. As the three works came from the same collector, there was every reason to believe that they were not from the master's hand, but from one of his assistants," she recounted to Le Parisien.

After spotting the painting, Jalaber sought the opinion of Courbet expert and curator at the C2RMF research laboratory for French museums, Bruno Mottin, who later came to view the painting in Granville. Mottin confirmed that the landscape of the lake was indeed a late work by the French master.

In a final twist, it emerged that another of the three works was in fact painted by Courbet's friend and frequent collaborator, Cherubino Pata.

By [Caroline Elbaor](#), Jan 10, 2017

"It was not necessarily easy to identify, especially as the paintings were bequeathed to the museum by the collector's brother in 1892, a few years after the painter's death," Jalaber explains.

The museum now has the complicated task of tracing the histories and provenance of the paintings, which will go on view at the Museum of Modern Art in Granville over the summer, ahead of taking pride of place at the Granville History Museum.