

ANTOINE VOLLON

1833—1900

Selected Works

DEMISCH DANANT

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Selected works
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Antoine Vollon in Saint-Prix, 1889
Paris, private collection

ANTOINE VOLLON

1833 — 1900

Selected Works

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HOW DID I BECOME INTERESTED IN ANTOINE VOLLON ?

It was five years ago now, during a renewed fascination with the history of 19th century French painting, and more specifically with the School of 1830, that generation of artists who revitalized landscape painting in France. Naturally, this interest extended to the Barbizon School, with its many pre-Impressionist painters whom I rediscovered and learned to appreciate.

As my research progressed, looking at thousands of images online, consulting hundreds of catalogues, visiting exhibitions, and spending a great deal of time again at Drouot, I came across, often by chance, several artists I either did not know or knew only by name. Some revealed themselves to me gradually, while others struck me in a more intense way, as was the case with Georges Michel, Eugène Isabey and Théodule Ribot.

Discovering the work of Henri Harpignies, Jules Dupré, and Charles-François Daubigny at first, then that of Norbert Goeneutte, Ferdinand Roybet, and Antoine Vollon, contemporaries of the Impressionists, was a slower process. I first needed to acquire a certain number of paintings in order to appreciate directly and fully the qualities of their work, and then gather as much information as possible to form a more complete and precise understanding of the true scope of their oeuvre.

These painters all shared a certain approach to painting that aligned with my taste for materiality, and often times for the unfinished, an approach stemming from a deliberate desire for synthesis, combined with rapid execution and driven by an energetic temperament. What initially appeared to me as a stylistic trait turned out to be the very mark of the modernity I had long been seeking, without being able to attribute it precisely to a particular movement or group of artists, so rich was that era in pictorial innovations and aesthetic upheavals.

I knew nothing of Antoine Vollon's work when his name and images associated with his art first appeared to me. I had no particular attraction to the genre of still life, even though Chardin was among my favorite painters, and I greatly admired such compositions by Manet and Cézanne, as well as the flower bouquets of Fantin-Latour and Odilon Redon, all of whom belonged to the same generation as Vollon.

I was quickly struck by the pictorial power of Vollon, by the energy and vitality he breathed into subjects which shaped tradition in painting since the 17th century, particularly in the Netherlands and in Spain. He brought still life back to life. His way of reinterpreting the genre, modernizing it with such distinctive and personal fervor, was a revelation for me.

The diversity of his work further deepened my interest. His landscapes delighted me through their execution; their manner reflected that of the previous generation of painters such as Daubigny and Boudin, two of his friends, but also Corot and Jules Dupré.

Vollon's figures and portraits captivated me just as much. I found again what continued to fascinate me in Manet and also in Ribot: that ability to convey, with great simplicity, the psychological depth of the subject, to express the essential in just a few brushstrokes, always with astonishing vitality.

Moreover, I quickly realized that Vollon had been an important painter in his lifetime, with a distinguished and prolific career. He had been admired, collected, exhibited, awarded, and supported by critics. Many of his major works entered French and international museum collections, particularly in the United States and in the Netherlands, though they are rarely displayed. The paradox is that his reputation faded relatively quickly after his death in 1900, and he has unfortunately since fallen into a kind of obscurity.

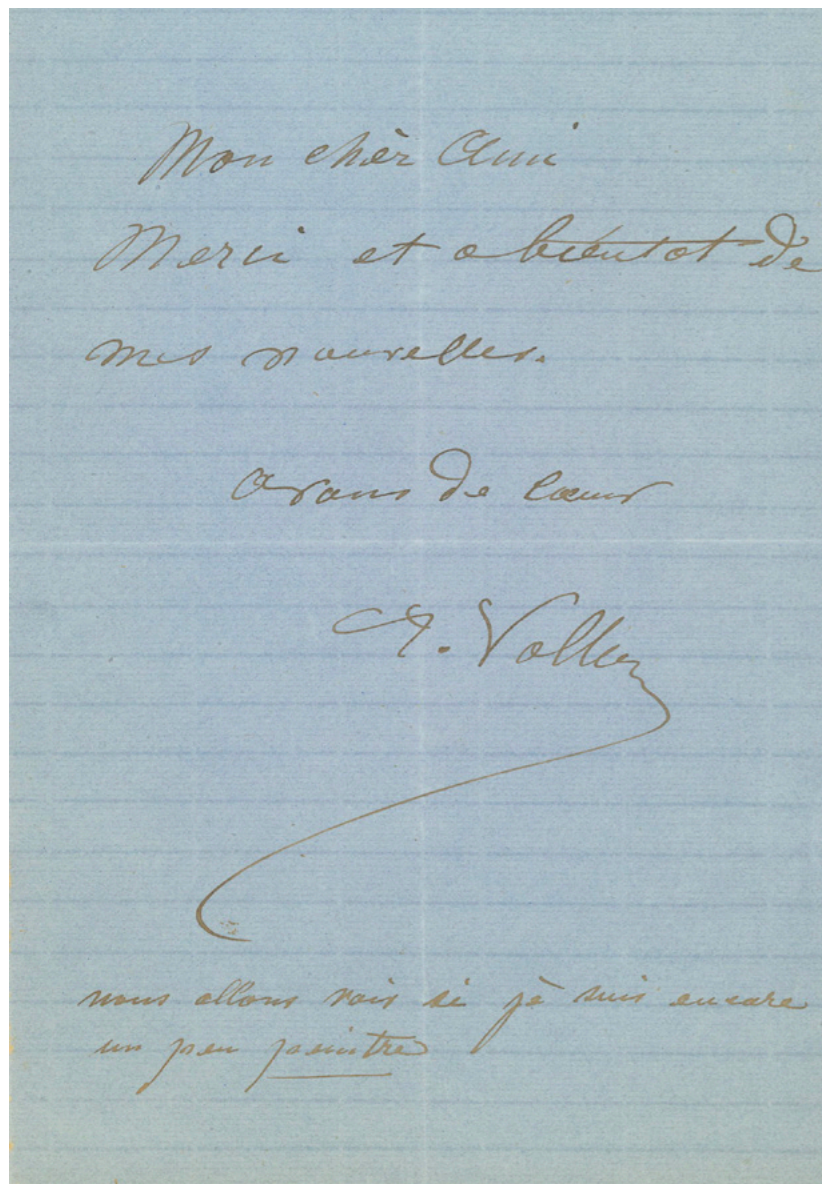
Out of fashion and pushed into the background of art history by the rapid succession of artistic movements since the Impressionists, the name of Vollon, like that of many other great painters of his generation, has slowly been erased from the grand narrative of 19th century French painting.

Collecting Vollon is a fascinating pursuit, and to some extent a kind of vocation, given the situation described above. Nevertheless, I was motivated and guided in this endeavor by the major exhibition devoted to him by the Wildenstein Gallery in New York in 2004-2005. Aside from the catalogue produced for that occasion, no book on Antoine Vollon exists, let alone a catalogue raisonné. The few bibliographical elements dedicated to him date mostly from his lifetime and the early decades of the last century: written primarily by people who knew him personally, they are not always objective, far from exhaustive, and unfortunately very sparsely illustrated.

This first presentation at TEFAF Maastricht, within the Focus section dedicated to solo shows, is a way of sharing this passion for the painter by exhibiting a selection of around twenty works chosen for their pictorial and historical qualities, but also for the diversity of their subjects.

It feels like a wonderful opportunity to highlight the art of Antoine Vollon, giving it the space to be looked at and contemplated, to be rediscovered and appreciated at its true worth.

Stéphane Danant
on January 1st, 2026



Autograph letter signed by Antoine Vollon
to an unknown recipient, undated
Paris, private collection

“WE SHALL SEE IF I AM STILL SOMETHING OF A PAINTER.”

“*Nous allons voir si je suis encore un peu peintre.*” — Excerpt from a letter by Antoine Vollon, undated, private collection

Antoine Vollon devoted his life and his work to painting. Developing his art of still life at the same time as Manet and Fantin-Latour, moving in the early 1860s in close proximity to the Realist aesthetics of Théodule Ribot and François Bonvin while remaining receptive to the revolution in landscape painting led by the forerunners of Impressionism, Daubigny and Boudin, Antoine Vollon never ceased to question the art of painting and its evolution over the second half of the 19th century. With the example of past centuries always in mind, he left a strong impression on his contemporaries through the candor of his painting and his ever-renewed creative ambition.

Trained as an engraver in the 1850s in his native city of Lyon, and becoming a draftsman whose work is more discreet but instantly recognizable, Antoine Vollon was one of the most important painters of his time. From his participation in the Salon des Refusés in 1863 to his appointment as a member of the jury of the official Salon in 1870, thus gaining a form of legitimacy among collectors, critics, and the Academy, he developed his oeuvre out of a tension between freedom and convention, between modernity and tradition. This is felt as much in his still lifes as in his landscapes, of which we share here a representative selection.

This catalogue and the exhibition it accompanies offer a new perspective on the art of Antoine Vollon. Each painting and drawing presented here allows us to feel the

painter’s passion and his sensibility. From his earliest years, Vollon dared fully, and his success was as remarkable as it was steady and serene. Like every major painter, he was as sharply criticized in the press as he was admired by his peers and crowned with prizes. His painting divides, questions, surprises, and delights. Certain elements are unmistakable: the frankness of his palette, the sureness of his hand and eye, which compose and create the overall harmony. These are among Vollon’s most remarkable qualities.

In the printed press of the time, such praises of his art could be read, here in the words of the art critic Émile Cardon: “Because Vollon has displayed incomparable virtuosity in one genre, still life, one would be wrong to confine him to it and to overlook the talent he has shown as a figure and landscape painter. His mastery reveals itself and asserts itself in everything he does. [...] Vollon is wholly present here, in all his diversity, always a master not only in one genre but in all, animating everything, giving life to everything, to objects as well as to people, always powerful, always original, always incisive, with an eye that belongs only to him, a palette that is his alone.” (*Moniteur des Arts*, August 30, 1889)

We wish to thank sincerely Carol Forman Tabler, specialist of the artist, who kindly confirmed the attribution of the works presented in this catalogue and provided us with valuable research material for their study.



Antoine Vollon in his studio
in Bessancourt, 1889
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
(photographic album of the Vollon family)

CHRONOLOGY

- 1833 Born in Lyon on April 20.
- 1850–1852 Antoine Vollon studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, in the workshop of the engraver Victor Vibert.
- 1853 Wins first prize in engraving. He later collaborates with the Parisian engravers Charasse and Soumy. His attention to the contrasts of black and will become a decisive element, particularly in his charcoal drawings, but also in his sense of composition and light.
- 1858–1859 Exhibits his first landscapes at the Salons des Beaux-Arts in Lyon. At this time, he is in touch with several artists from Lyon such as François Vernay, François-Auguste Ravier, and Antoine Jean Bail.
- 1859 Moves to Paris. Vollon meets the new generation of Realist painters, notably Théodule Ribot and François Bonvin. Having studied and questioned the art of the past together, especially Dutch and Spanish painting of the 17th century, as well as Chardin in the 18th, they approach painting with a similar aesthetic sensibility.
- 1863 Vollon takes part in the Salon des Refusés, organized in François Bonvin's studio, alongside Manet, Cazin, Cals, Jongkind, and Whistler.
- 1864 First participation in the Salon des Artistes Français. First purchase by the State: *Intérieur de cuisine* (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Saint-Germain, Auxerre, France). From this point on, Vollon becomes a regular exhibitor at the Salon, where he will show 43 works up until 1900, the year of his death.
- 1865 Henri Fantin-Latour includes Vollon in his group portrait *le Toast! (hommage à la Vérité)*, exhibited at the Salon that same year. The painting was later destroyed by the artist; the surviving fragment depicting Vollon is now in the Musée d'Orsay. Vollon appeared alongside Whistler, Manet, Cazin and Fantin-Latour.
- 1868 A year of travels and encounters. Between Amsterdam and London, he spends time in Auvers-sur-Oise at the home of Charles-François Daubigny, in the company of Félix Bracquemond, Théodule Ribot, Corot, and Daumier. Together, they develop the project for the Société des Aquafortistes.
- 1870 Serves for the first time as a member of the Salon jury.
- Moves to Brussels, where Vollon lives with his wife Fanny and their two children, Alexis (1865–1945), who would become a painter, and Marguerite (1868–1949). Befriends Narcisse Díaz de la Peña and Eugène Boudin.
- 1871 Vollon and Eugène Boudin paint together in Antwerp during the summer (catalogue n°6). Visits the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.
- 1875 Death of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, a close friend of Antoine Vollon.
- 1878 Death of Charles-François Daubigny.
- Awarded a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle; Vollon gains recognition from both the State and French and international collectors. His paintings begin to circulate in collections abroad. He is promoted to the rank of Officer of the Légion d'Honneur.

- 1878 Purchases a farm in Bessancourt, located on Grande Rue, 12 (now rue Antoine Vollon).
- 1879 Vollon discovers the city of Marseille, where he would return to live and work several times thereafter, notably in 1880, 1882, and 1887.
- 1880 At the Salon, his still life simply titled *Courge* stirs critical debate and establishes Vollon as one of the foremost defenders and representatives of this pictorial genre (see Carol Forman Tabler, “Antoine Vollon and his smashing pumpkin: on media hype and the meanings of still life”, *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide*, vol. 1, n° 2, Autumn 2002).
- 1885 Stay in the city of Pau, where he paints the *Portrait of the Spanish guitarist Camacho* (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm), exhibited at the Salon that same year.
- 1886 Vollon exhibits a landscape for the first time at the Paris Salon: *Vue du Tréport*.
- 1889 At the Exposition Universelle, Antoine Vollon presents several paintings, including the still life *Potiche de Chine* (catalogue n°1).
- 1897 Elected to the Institut de France, to the seat previously held by the painter François Louis Français.
- 1898 Death of Eugène Boudin. Vollon helps organize a retrospective exhibition in homage to his friend, which opens at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1899.
- 1900 Death of Antoine Vollon at age 67, on August 27, in Paris, rue de Dunkerque. He is buried at the Père Lachaise Cemetery.

- 1901 May 20–23: Posthumous sale of Antoine Vollon’s studio at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris. Under the gavel of Maître Paul Chevallier and with the expertise of Arnold and Tripp, 80 paintings by Antoine Vollon are auctioned. His personal collection is also sold, revealing the extent of his taste and curiosity: alongside works by his friends Carpeaux, Corot, Daubigny, and Ribot, it included works by Old Masters and early 19th century painters such as Guardi, Fragonard, Boilly, Greuze, Prud’hon, Eugène Isabey, and ten works by (or attributed to) Géricault. At this sale, the State acquires Vollon’s *Vue d’Anvers* (1871) for the Musée du Luxembourg, today in the Musée d’Orsay.

NOTABLE EXHIBITIONS ON ANTOINE VOLLON

- 1937 Paris, galerie Raphaël Gérard, *Antoine Vollon*
- 1966 Paris, galerie Bénézit, *Hommage de Paul Gadala à Antoine Vollon*
- 2004 New York, galerie Wildenstein & Co. Inc. *Antoine Vollon (1833-1900), a painter’s painter*



Vollon’s studio in Bessancourt, 1889 – Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

List of artworks

1. Nature morte au vase de porcelaine, aiguière et fruits
2. Nature morte à la tranche de citrouille et céleri
3. Nature morte au coin de cuisine
4. Un panier de pommes dans un paysage
5. Nature morte aux pivoines et griottes
6. Vue d'Anvers : le port et l'église Notre-Dame
7. Nature morte au bouquet : bleuets, marguerites et géraniums
8. La mer à Mers, près le Tréport
9. Pêcheur au Tréport
10. Nature morte au lieu et aux maquereaux
11. Nature morte au congre, homard et petits poissons
12. Chemin bordant une ferme
13. Basse-cour
14. Nature morte au gibier
15. Gibier

PAINTINGS

1. NATURE MORTE AU VASE DE PORCELAINE, AIGUIÈRE ET FRUITS · c. 1884

Oil on canvas

81,5 × 65,5 cm

32 H × 25,8 inches

Signed lower right : “A. Vollon”

exhibition label on the back :
“Galerie Raphaël Gérard / n° 13 /
Les Fruits / exposition A. Vollon”

EXHIBITIONS

Paris, Exposition Universelle
de Paris, May 5–October 31, 1889,
no. 1354, *Potiche de Chine*
(as property of Robert West,
Saint-Pierre-lès-Calais)

Paris, Galerie Raphaël Gérard,
“Antoine Vollon” November 5–20,
1937, no. 38, *Les Fruits*

PROVENANCE

Paris, Paul Gadala collection

Paris, Galerie Raphaël Gérard

Medfield (Massachusetts, USA),

Ellen L. Parkinson collection

sale New York, Christie’s,

February 28, 1991, lot 57

sale Tokyo, New Art Est-Ouest

Auction, May 19, 2024, lot 82

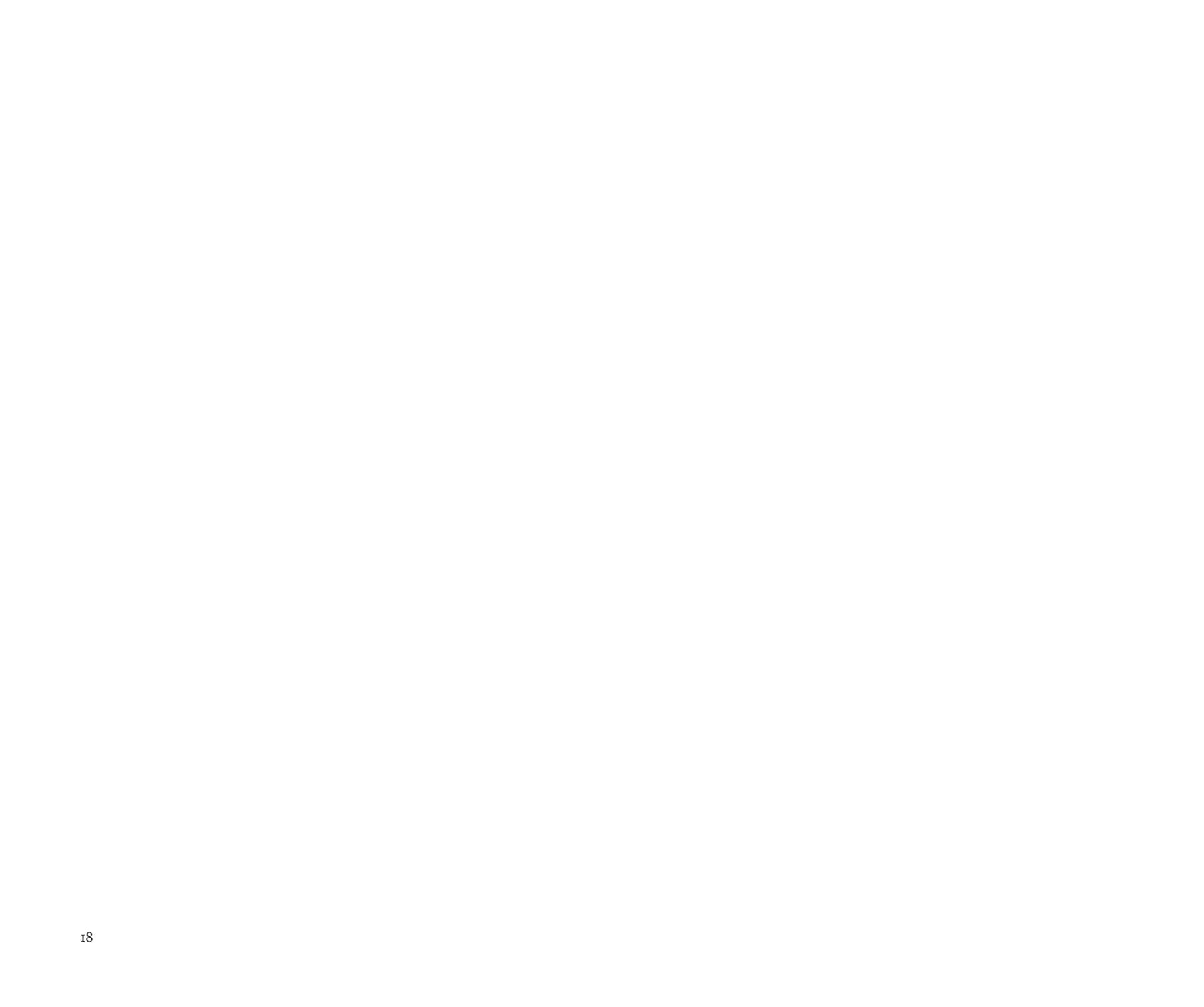
Paris, private collection

Still life painting is an exercise in balancing contrasts and sensations. These objects arranged on a heavy, ornamented carpet each attract and reflect light in their own way, according to their volume and placement, and resonate visually with each other. The porcelain vase is the main object: it dictates the vertical format of the composition, and the surrounding objects harmonize with it. If this is indeed the painting Vollon exhibited at the Exposition Universelle of 1889, as suggested by Carol Forman Tabler, specialist of the artist, the catalogue indicates that the work, then titled *Potiche de Chine*, belonged to the ceramics and porcelain collector Robert West, who also owned a lace factory in Calais, in Northern France.

The patron likely asked Vollon to give pride of place to this finely decorated vase, probably from his personal collection, so that it might gain a second radiance through painting.

The light reflected by the vase illuminates the ewer, and through successive touches of paint, the fruits as well are covered in light. Vollon allows himself the most striking contrasts, in full command of his palette and effects: the black grapes against the dark background, the lemon appearing without artifice, and the peeled oranges revealing every nuance of their colors and of their perfumes.





2. NATURE MORTE À LA TRANCHE DE CITROUILLE ET CÉLERI

Oil on panel

47 × 55 cm

18,5 H × 21,7 inches

Signed lower left : “A. Vollon”

labels on the back :

Georg Schäfer collection
(Schweinfurt); Douwes Fine Art
(Amsterdam)

EXHIBITION

Amsterdam, Douwes Fine Arts,
“Autour de Barbizon”,
November 18–December 12,
1985, no. 74

PROVENANCE

sale Frankfurt, Rudolf Bangel,
March 9, 1926, lot 225
Schweinfurt (Germany),
Georg Schäfer collection
London, Douwes Galleries, 1980
Amsterdam, Douwes Fine Art,
1985, no. 9806
sale Amsterdam, De Zwaan Auction,
October 23, 2025, lot 6451
Paris, private collection

In 1880, Antoine Vollon surprised the visitors to the Salon with a still life depicting a pumpkin, so simple, yet painted with such conviction, boldness, and detail that it fascinated the critics. An article by Carol Forman Tabler*, specialist of the artist, explains how this was a deliberate strategy on Vollon’s part to restore legitimacy and prominence to the genre of still life, now that he had achieved recognition as a Salon exhibitor.

If Chardin in the 18th century favored broadly cut slices of melon, François Bonvin, friend and mentor to Vollon from his earliest years in Paris around 1859, also had a particular fondness for the motif of the pumpkin slice. The visual appeal of this vegetable lies in the

frankness of its color and in the way it holds light within a composition: a matte light, immediately absorbed, yet imposing in presence when harmonized with simpler objects rendered with equal precision. Antoine Vollon was especially fond of these uncompromising still lifes, painted swiftly, guided solely by feeling and sensation.

The reflections of light emphasize the materiality and volume of each object: here, a broad stroke of white for the ceramic pot; there, a single line for the metal dish. Vollon applies his brush with remarkable subtlety, adapting it to give each element its own presence within the composition.

* Carol Forman Tabler, “Antoine Vollon and his smashing pumpkin: On media hype and the meanings of still life”, *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall 2002





3. NATURE MORTE AU COIN DE CUISINE

Oil on canvas
43 × 53 cm
17 H × 20,9 inches
Signed upper right : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

Paris, private collection
sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Daguerre, November 19, 2024, lot 12
Paris, private collection



Antoine Vollon

Un singe faisant cuire des œufs, c. 1865-1870

Oil on canvas
61 × 50,7 cm

Source : Wildenstein & Co. Inc. exhibition catalogue,
Antoine Vollon (1833-1900), a painter's painter,
2004-2005, no. 38

Through the simplification of forms and volumes, the slightly unexpected sense of composition, and the way each object stands apart from the others, here Antoine Vollon explores a similar aesthetic to that of still lifes by François Bonvin and Théodule Ribot, two artists who guided and inspired him upon his arrival in Paris in 1859 and to whom he remained close throughout his life.

Choosing a dark palette for the background and deep contrasts in shades of brown and black, the painter captures with remarkable fidelity the reality of these humble, quiet objects of everyday life.

The contrast created with the food placed on the table is all the more striking because these items, too, are represented in their most stripped-down reality, yet so luminous and full of color.

The wicker-covered bottle is an object Vollon occasionally reused in his compositions: it appears, notably, in one of his *singeries*, a series of paintings dating from around 1865 in which the artist explored, in his own way, the theme of a monkey imitating human activities, a subject popularized by Chardin in the 18th century and later enjoyed by Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps in the 1840s.



4. UN PANIER DE POMMES DANS UN PAYSAGE

Oil on canvas
65 × 81,5 cm
25,6 H × 32 inches
Studio stamp lower right :
“A. Vollon”

PROVENANCE

sale Lyon, Conan
Belleville, October 10,
2023, lot 406
Paris, private collection

*“I learned my craft by studying for weeks a single apple wrapped in air.
And that is how I taught myself to model any object and to place each thing in its proper plane.*”*

After reading this quote by Vollon shared by his student and friend Étienne Martin, there is no doubt that the depiction of an apple in one of Vollon’s compositions is always a meaningful moment for him. If Cézanne, from Aix-en-Provence, wished to astonish Paris “with one apple”, a single apple painted with all his heart, it seems that Vollon, too, had his own ambition when treating this subject, which appears so frequently under the brush of painters. This composition, in particular, which is surprising in several aspects, seems guided, if not dictated, by a second level of interpretation that invites reflection.

The symbolism traditionally associated with apples is subtly conveyed by Vollon: abundance, first, is expressed through the overflowing quantity of fruits; vitality and fertility, as well, are felt

in the vigor of the colors and the energetic handling so characteristic of the painter’s manner, even in the sheen of the apples, which seem varnished, almost unreal or artificial, heightening their volume and material presence in contrast with the rest of the image, which is markedly more blurred. This strong contrast between two modes of painting is both Vollon’s virtuosity and his freedom.

What is most striking in this painting, beyond its unusually large format for such a subject, is Vollon’s decision to place this basket of apples in a garden rendered only in broad strokes, almost abstract, painted with great fluidity and with very little pigment diluted in much oil, as is often the case in his works.

In front of a composition like this, can we still refer to it as a still life ?

By way of comparison, we know of another basket of apples painted by Vollon in which everything is ordered and perfectly composed to meet the conventions of the genre, which in most cases seeks only to be the ideal representation of an object or a group of objects in an interior.

This painting, however, through a certain strangeness, or rather a deliberate shift in the representation of reality, seems to want to show, or to make one feel, something else. And perhaps this is Vollon’s ambition: to ensure that apples deserve as much attention from the viewer as, say, a group of figures seated in a garden.

* Étienne Martin, *Antoine Vollon, peintre (1833–1900)*, Marseille, 1923, p. 25





Antoine Vollon
Panier de pommes, c. 1875-1885
Oil on canvas
54,6 × 65,5 cm
Source : Wildenstein & Co. Inc. catalogue, 2004-2005, no. 48

5. NATURE MORTE AUX PIVOINES ET GRIOTTES

Oil on canvas

59,5 × 73 cm
23,4 H × 28,7 inches

Signed and dedicated lower right :
"à mon ami Puvis de Chavannes /
A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes
collection, then by descent

sale Lyon, Artenchères,
October 16, 2024, lot 24
Paris, private collection

Nothing could be more symbolic than a painter from Lyon offering a bouquet of flowers in homage to a glorious figure of his native city, that is, to one of the most remarkable and celebrated artists of the second half of the 19th century: Pierre Puvis de Chavannes.

These peonies overflow from their basket, so generous is the offering; the small cherries, or griottes, like flashes of brilliant red, gleam and add depth to a composition whose balance Vollon controls with complete mastery. The canvas, executed swiftly, is guided by a hand as assured as the eye that composes in the moment: the flowers are painted with a richness of texture that never detracts from the delicacy and lightness of the whole. At the

bottom right, the final touches were certainly these notes of white and red that punctuate the painting session and lead the eye to the dedication and signature.

For this still life, in which the lighting is so clear and the brushstrokes so rapid, a date around 1890 seems most likely. In that very year, Puvis de Chavannes had revived the Société nationale des Beaux-Arts with the organization of a major exhibition at the Palais de l'Industrie, where Vollon exhibited two paintings.





6. VUE D'ANVERS : LE PORT ET L'ÉGLISE NOTRE-DAME · 1871

Oil on cardboard
mounted on canvas
41 × 58,5 cm
16,1 H × 23 inches
Signed lower left : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

Paris, private collection
sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Daguerre, May 31, 2024, lot 104
Paris, private collection



Antoine Vollon
Vue d'Anvers, 1871
Oil on canvas
54 × 65 cm
Paris, Musée d'Orsay
(inv. RF 1986 25)

Antoine Vollon's journey to Belgium during the Franco-Prussian War marks an important moment in his career and in his thinking about painting. In this forced exile, he distanced himself from Paris and from his fellow artists, reinventing himself through contact with other painters who had also taken refuge abroad. At that time, settled in Brussels, Vollon grew particularly close to Narcisse Díaz de la Peña and Eugène Boudin, both recognized as remarkable landscape painters.

Vollon and Boudin's trip to Antwerp is documented by several paintings and works on paper, mostly showing a similar viewpoint over the city's port: the river Scheldt occupies the foreground, and in the distance rises the Cathedral of Our Lady.

During this period, Vollon was experimenting with lighter supports typical of plein-air painting, of which this work, relatively large in format, is a fine example.

This sketch, painted on cardboard and mounted on canvas, is very close in composition to the painting now in the Musée d'Orsay, acquired by the French State in 1901 at the sale of Antoine Vollon's studio. The similarity is such that it may be considered a preparatory study for the Orsay painting.



7. NATURE MORTE AU BOUQUET : BLEUETS, MARGUERITES ET GÉRANIUMS · early 1860s

Oil on canvas
46 × 35,5 cm
18 H × 14 inches
Signed lower right : “A.
Vollon”

PROVENANCE

sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Beaussant Lefèvre & associés,
March 1, 2024, lot 55
Paris, private collection



Henri Fantin-Latour
Antoine Vollon, 1865
Oil on canvas
30 × 18 cm
Paris, musée d'Orsay
(inv. RF 1974 17)

An engaging example of a floral still life typical of the 1860s, painted at a time when Vollon was close to the model of Henri Fantin-Latour, with the use of a neutral, subtle background and a tight framing focused solely on the flower vase and a few decorative elements in the foreground. To the faithful rendering of the flowers, each distinctly recognizable, responds the painter's delight in detail: the softened transition between vase and background achieved with a flick of blue; the geranium petals reduced to touches of pure color; the grapes transformed into perfect spheres shaped by nature, set beside the equally perfect craftsmanship of the porcelain cup.

The contrast in sharpness between the depiction of the bouquet and

that of the porcelain elements, which appear almost blurred, is a deliberate pictorial choice that sets Vollon apart from his most obvious models and brings him closer to the modernity of Manet and Odilon Redon.

The ties between Antoine Vollon and Henri Fantin-Latour are an interesting aspect of his career. Beyond the question of influence and inspiration, the connection between the two artists is documented by Vollon's presence in the group portrait exhibited at the Salon of 1865, *Le Toast ! (hommage à la Vérité)*, where he appeared alongside Whistler and Fantin-Latour himself. Although the painting was later destroyed by its author, the surviving fragment depicting Vollon is now in the collections of Musée d'Orsay.





8. LA MER À MERS, PRÈS LE TRÉPORT · c. 1880

Oil on canvas
38 × 55 cm
15 H × 21,7 inches
Studio stamp lower right : “A.
Vollon”

PROVENANCE

sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Atelier Vollon sale,
May 20–23, 1901, lot 9

France, private collection
sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Oger-Blanchet,
November 16, 2023, lot 33

Paris, private collection

Coming from the posthumous sale of Antoine Vollon’s studio in 1901, as confirmed by the signature stamp in the lower right, this painting remained in the artist’s possession until the end of his life. The landscape, datable to around 1880, is set at Mers-les-Bains, near Le Tréport in Normandy, where the painter owned a house and studio from 1863 onward, later passed on to his son Alexis.

Evoking a familiar landscape, and borrowing color nuances that immediately recall the sense of light of Eugène Boudin and the refinement of Édouard Manet’s brushwork (in compositions such as *l’Évasion de Rochefort* or *Sur la plage*, both in the Musée d’Orsay), there is no doubt that this painting remained

an important source of inspiration for Vollon over the years. Nothing is left to chance in this composition. Each flat tint, allowing to distinguish sea, sky, and clouds, is animated by subtle variations that convey the overall movement of the waves, the reflections on the water, and the wind pushing the sailboats.

The boats, painted with the tip of the brush, punctuate the horizon line and, like the clouds, they drift across this landscape, which will soon return to the splendor of its silent vastness.





9. PÊCHEUR AU TRÉPORT · c. 1865

Oil on canvas
48 × 33 cm
18,9 H × 13 inches
Signed upper left : "A.
Vollon"

PROVENANCE

sale Paris, Millon,
January 30, 2025, lot 471
Paris, private collection



Antoine Vollon
Pêcheuse portant ses paniers, 1874
Oil on canvas
56,6 × 42 cm
Source : Wildenstein & Co. Inc catalogue,
2004-2005, no. 32

Antoine Vollon regularly painted portraits of fishermen in the area around Le Tréport, where he lived and worked as early as 1863. The two paintings he exhibited on this theme at the Salons of 1878 and 1889 were relatively traditional, bust-length portraits focused on a precise study of the gaze and facial expression. The present painting, datable to around 1865 according to Carol Forman Tabler, is a full-length portrait – which is rather rare in Vollon's work – which creates a certain distance from the model. The figure becomes anonymous, yet more deeply integrated into his everyday environment.

Remarkable for its concision and emotional force, this portrait reveals Vollon's faster, more rugged manner, admirably suited to the sincere depiction of a fisherman. This man, worn by years of labor, is elevated, almost ennobled, by the painter's

eye and palette, which translate onto the canvas his taciturn nature, his fatigue and the passage of time.

Another painting by the artist, *Pêcheuse portant ses paniers*, dated 1874, is composed in a similar way and seems driven by the same sentiment. Everything is reduced to essentials: the expression of the faces, the clothing, the setting, all rendered in a sober, humble, and rugged palette, with broad areas of color applied with varying intensity. An overall sense of weariness, of fatigue is felt, clearly linked to the harsh working conditions of the time, something that did not fail to move the painter, who lived among them in Normandy. Vollon shows a sensitivity to this rustic nobility, this ancestral robustness, which also inspired Jean-François Millet when he painted the rural world around Barbizon.



A. G. 1870



10. NATURE MORTE AU LIEU ET AUX MAQUEREAUX

Oil on cradled panel
37 × 46,5 cm
14,6 H × 18,3 inches
Signed upper right : “A. Vollon”

EXHIBITION

New York, Rosenberg & Co.
“Still life; variations on a theme”, February 18–April 2,
2006

PROVENANCE

sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot, Tajan,
October 24, 2008, lot 191
New York, Rosenberg & Co.
sale New York, Stair Galleries,
April 25, 2024, lot 484
Paris, private collection

This still life comes as close as possible to the sense of modernity, that is to say, to the radical sincerity which is sometimes felt in Realist paintings. The subject is humble, yet the painter’s seriousness and sense of wonder remain intact, for it is clear that to Antoine Vollon everything is worthy of being painted.

The artist explores every possibility of a restricted palette by varying his brushwork: broad strokes for the background; rapid, precise, expansive touches for the body of each fish. With the end of the brush he lets the light glide across the scales, and perhaps with the tip of his finger (as witnesses often recalled having seen him doing), he deepens the blue along the bodies of the mackerel.

This painting finds an illuminating comparison in the collections of the Musée d’Orsay, which preserves one

of the works acquired by the French State from Vollon in 1870: the still life titled *Poissons de mer*.

Also executed on a wooden panel, that painting appears to be the original model for the present composition, sharing the same simplicity of elements and the same truthfulness in depicting fish left on the block after the catch and the market.

A testimony written in 1901 by the painter Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret, in homage to Vollon after his death, helps us imagine the circumstances in which such an important painting might have been created, and sheds light on Vollon’s particular interest in this type of composition: “At the sight of these magnificent fish, he is seized by an irresistible desire to paint them in all the brilliance of their freshness. At once, among the

canvases brought back from Paris, he searches for something suitable; all are too small. Time is short; what to do? He notices the solid shutter banging against the window and takes it down. He finds it in good condition and well dried, the old shutter shaken by so many storms and burned by so many summers. He carries it to the carpenter, who planes and sizes it, and the work begins. In one burst, without reworking, feverishly, until evening, he lays down the broad strokes of paint, brings them together, models them, and under his attentive, firm, and supple brush, the vigorous tones and silvery nuances harmonize. [...] The next morning he hastens to add a few small accessories in the background, and the work is finished. His brush would sign none more beautiful.*”

* Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret,
“Notice sur M. Antoine Vollon, lue
dans la séance du 16 novembre 1901”,
*Publications diverses de l’Institut de
France*, LXXI, no. 31, 1901, p. 9-10





Antoine Vollon
Poissons de mer, c. 1870
Oil on panel
82,5 × 119 cm
Paris, Musée d'Orsay
(inv. RF118)

11. NATURE MORTE AU CONGRE, HOMARD ET PETITS POISSONS · 1899

Oil on canvas

67,6 × 83,8 cm
26,6 H × 33 inches

Signed, dated and dedicated lower left :
“à mon ami Lumière / A. Vollon 1899”

PROVENANCE

Antoine Lumière collection,
then by descent
sale Paris, Drouot Montaigne,
Christian de Quay & Francis Lombrail,
December 19, 1996, lot 2

France, private collection

sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Baron Ribeyre & associés,
June 17, 2024, lot 15

Paris, private collection

A very fine example of Vollon's generous, expansive, and ambitious still lifes of the 1890s, this composition, where all the senses are awakened, is a joyful celebration of abundance, standing in sharp contrast to Vollon's paintings of the 1870s, in which a few fish lay, almost forgotten, on a kitchen table.

This richness of seafood, this omnipresent sense of viscous texture conveyed through the handling of light, suggesting that the fish and shellfish might still be moving on the kitchen block, recalls, in a certain way, a painting that must have fascinated Vollon from his earliest visits to the Louvre, which is *La Raie* by Chardin. That still life, dated 1728, produces the same impression as found here, of an almost exaggerated accumulation of

fish and shellfish flesh; and in both compositions appears a strange, unsettling creature for the viewer: a ray that seems to smile for Chardin, and a nearly monstrous conger eel for Vollon.

The dedication of this painting to Antoine Lumière, a chemist and photographer in Lyon, an entrepreneur, and the father of the illustrious inventors of the cinematograph, Auguste and Louis Lumière, suggests the nature of the friendship and conviviality between the two men. “These two inflammable temperaments were well made to get along*” writes Étienne Martin, adding that Antoine Lumière became one of the most fervent defenders of Antoine Vollon's work after the painter's death in 1900.

* Étienne Martin, *Antoine Vollon, peintre (1833-1900)*, Marseille, 1923, p. 68



12. CHEMIN BORDANT UNE FERME

Oil on canvas
27 × 35 cm
10,6 H × 13,8 inches
Signed lower left : “A. Vollon”

EXHIBITION

Laren (Netherlands), Singer Laren Museum, “Vier Franse Meesters : Bonvin, Ribot, Rousseau, Vollon”, July 15–September 16, 1962, no. 82 (not reproduced)

PROVENANCE

The Hague, G.J. Neiuwenhuizen Segaar collection
Amsterdam, Cornelis Paulus Van Pauwvliet collection
sale London, Bonhams, November 21, 2023, lot 112
Paris, private collection

“There, through the accuracy of his drawing and his attention to detail, [Vollon] presents himself as the direct heir, the continuator of the lesser-known Dutch masters, with a more modern seductiveness of paint and sincerity of impression.*”

This remark by Vollon’s disciple, the painter Étienne Martin, concerning his master’s landscapes, resonates both with the aesthetic and with the history of this painting, which remained in the Netherlands throughout the 20th century.

In this landscape, situated, in our view, in the outskirts of Paris (perhaps at Bessancourt, where Vollon had a residence from 1878 onward), the contrast between the finely detailed farm architecture, recalling in particular Herman Saftleven, and the vast, turbulent sky in the manner of Salomon van Ruysdael, offers remarkable testimony to Vollon’s admiration for Dutch painting, at once meticulous and inclined toward the sublime.

The same feeling is present here: Vollon’s palette confronts the elements and masters them without hesitation. The nuances of each material are rendered in detail, with both precision and freedom. Two figures stand out, one on the path, the other unloading the cart in the background, yet they seem almost abstract, so fully are they integrated into this landscape of their daily life.

This painting was exhibited in 1962 at the Singer Laren Museum, in an important exhibition that offered a new perspective on Realist aesthetics, *Vier franse meesters* («Four French Masters»), where Vollon was shown alongside his friends François Bonvin, Théodule Ribot, and Philippe Rousseau.

For each of these painters, landscape painting represents a lesser-known aspect of their work, yet one that often reveals the full qualities of their eye and palette, as is the case here with Vollon.

* Étienne Martin, *Antoine Vollon, peintre (1833–1900)*, Marseille, 1923, p. 25–26





13. BASSE-COUR

Oil on panel
45,4 × 50,8 cm
17,9 H × 20 inches
Signed lower left : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

sale Paris, Drouot
Estimations, May 14, 2025, lot
61
Paris, private collection

Antoine Vollon painting in
the courtyard of his farm in
Bessancourt, 1889

Paris, Bibliothèque
Nationale de France





14. NATURE MORTE AU GIBIER

Oil on canvas

60,5 × 73 cm

23,8 H × 28,7 inches

Signed lower right : "A. Vollon"

exhibition label on the back :

"Galerie Barbizon / N° 3472 Juin 75 /

Vollon / Nature morte au Gibier"

EXHIBITION

Paris, galerie Barbizon,
"Tableaux 19^e et 20^e siècles",
June 1975, no. 3472

PROVENANCE

Paris, galerie Barbizon, 1975
sale Auch (France), Gers Gascogne
enchères, December 5, 2025, lot 183





15. GIBIER

Oil on canvas

108,7 × 73,7 cm

42,8 H × 29 inches

Signed upper right : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

sale Rennes, Rennes Enchères,

June 10, 2024, lot 113

Paris, private collection

Here, no distancing of the viewer's gaze, as tradition would dictate for a still life; no décor; no restraint in the manner of painting, nor in the choice of format: a true lesson in painting delivered by Antoine Vollon. Judging from the speed of execution, the vigor of the brushstrokes, and the overall harmony, each a perfectly mastered feat for such a complex subject, it feels as though we are in the studio with Vollon, witnessing the most direct confrontation between the artist and his subject. The execution of this painting seems to follow the painter's eye as he discovers the full depth of this still life, applying himself to look, analyze, and paint all at once.

The birds depicted here – certainly a common crane, and then a smaller one, a red-legged partridge, whose brown-colored breast is visible on the left – have just been hung on the wall. In a few moments, the earthenware container will collect their blood.

As raw as it is realistic, this canvas is an exercise in virtuosity, demonstrating the sureness of the artist's eye and hand in achieving an incomparable painting, at once unsettling and stimulating for the viewer. Over the centuries and up to contemporary painting, this work by Antoine Vollon evokes, notably, the hunting trophies of Jan Weenix in 17th century Holland, but also the most striking explorations of Chaïm Soutine, Eugène Leroy, and Yan Pei-Ming, artists who dared to explore a painting that is as radical as it is intriguing, one that plays with pictorial tradition to encourage the viewer to remain attentive to what can be most moving in the very materiality of paint.





Antoine Vollon at home in Bessancourt, 1889 – Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France



Antoine Vollon in Saint-Prix, 1889 – Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

List of artworks

16. Une rue tranquille à Barbizon
17. Personnages dans un village
18. Vue du pont Marie à Paris
19. Vue du bassin de Neptune à Versailles
20. Arbre en hiver
21. Étude d'homme portant un casque d'archer

WORKS ON PAPER

16. UNE RUE TRANQUILLE À BARBIZON · early 1860s

Charcoal and white chalk on paper
31,5 × 44,1 cm
12,4 H × 17,4 inches
Signed lower left : “A. Vollon”

EXHIBITIONS

Rotterdam, Kunsthandel
Unger & van Mens, “Antoine Vollon”
March 13–April 11, 1937

La Haye, Gemeentemuseum,
October 10–November 29, 1942

PROVENANCE

Amsterdam, Frans Buffa & Sons
Rotterdam, Henricus Nijgh collection
sale Amsterdam, De Zwaan,
May 15, 2025, lot 6445
Paris, private collection

Dated, according to Carol Forman Tabler, to the early 1860s, this drawing is a highly interesting record of Vollon’s time in the village of Barbizon, so important for the development of landscape painting in the mid-19th century. It is certainly this historical resonance that so charmed Dutch collectors of Vollon’s work, as reflected in the provenance of this sheet throughout the 20th century.

Antoine Vollon developed a charcoal technique that is immediately recognizable, and this landscape is a fine example of it. For this artist, trained as an engraver during his early years as a student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, the nuances

of black and white served as the tuning fork for every element of a composition.

The charcoal line faithfully records the landscape of Barbizon’s main street, shown here, where Jean-François Millet had his home and studio. It is then through the varied intensities of charcoal and the use of a stump that Vollon brings life and movement to the trees in his composition. The sky is animated by white chalk highlights that deepen the contrast of volumes and complete the overall effect of the sheet.

* Étienne Martin, *Antoine Vollon, peintre (1833-1900)*, Marseille, 1923, p. 26



17. PERSONNAGES DANS UN VILLAGE · c. 1860

Charcoal, pastel
and white chalk on paper
6 × 8 cm
2,4 H × 3,1 inches
Signed lower left : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

Paris, galerie Malibran
Paris, private collection



18. VUE DU PONT MARIE À PARIS · c. 1859

Charcoal and pastel on paper
22 × 37,5 cm
8,7 H × 14,8 inches
Signed lower right : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Muizon-Rieunier,
June 14, 2017, lot 52

Paris, galerie Christian Le Serbon
Paris, private collection



19. VUE DU BASSIN DE NEPTUNE À VERSAILLES

Pencil, charcoal and pastel on paper
40 × 27 cm
15,7 H × 10,6 inches
Signed lower right : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

Paris, Dr. Norbert Pain collection
sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
May 23, 1900, lot 89
sale Paris, Rossini,
April 19, 2019, lot 98
Lyon, private collection
Lyon, galerie Mazarini
Paris, private collection

This drawing comes from the collection of Dr. Norbert Pain, a friend of Antoine Vollon and a collector of his work from the 1880s onward. The catalogue of the sale held after his death, on May 23, 1900, at the Hôtel Drouot, lists twelve paintings and two drawings by the artist, among which this composition stands out for its large format and for its subject, a true favorite of Vollon in the gardens of the Château de Versailles.





20. ARBRE EN HIVER

Charcoal and pastel on paper
17,5 × 12 cm
6,9 H × 4,7 inches
Signed lower right : "A. Vollon"

PROVENANCE

sale Paris, Hôtel Drouot,
Auction Art – Rémy le Fur &
associés, December 12, 2023, lot 12

Paris, private collection



21. ÉTUDE D'HOMME PORTANT UN CASQUE D'ARCHER : AUTO PORTRAIT PRÉSUMÉ DE VOLLON

Charcoal and pastel on paper

22 x 18 cm

8,7 H x 7 inches

Signed lower right : "A.
Vollon"

PROVENANCE

sale Dijon, Sadde,
February 11, 2025, lot 181
Paris, private collection



“As for Monsieur Vollon, he is a virtuoso of the palette, he is one of our most skillful painters, and I use the word here in its true sense; there is in him a marvelous craftsman with an unctuous and powerful technique, such as has certainly not been evidenced since Courbet.”

Émile Zola

“le Naturalisme au Salon”, *Le Voltaire*, June 22, 1880, p. 3-4



Etienne Carjat,
Portrait of Antoine Vollon, 1872
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Demisch Danant
30 W 12th St
New York NY 10011

