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Daniel Ridgway Knight, *The Shepherdess of Rolleboise*
Léon Marcotte, *Table*

Dominic Carter: At first glance, this painting of a peasant girl and the ornate table beneath it may seem to have nothing in common. But both testify to the continuing French influence on American taste.

First to the painting. Artist Daniel Ridgway Knight studied in France, as viewers in his day would have known just by looking at this canvas. The solidity of the girl's figure and the smooth brushwork used to define her form are products of Knight's academic training. Note the silvery light of the atmosphere and the roughly painted landscape in the foreground—qualities also associated with French painting. The girl herself was most likely a professional model costumed as a French peasant.

So, in subject matter and style, what's American about it?

Barbara Gallati: I don't think we could say this is distinctly American, but it is distinctly a painting by Knight.

This is a style for which he became very well known and a subject matter that he made his. Whether we want to consider these as imitations of French art or whether we want to look at them as identifiably American responses to French training—that's a debate that we could easily get into.

Dominic Carter: Stylistic questions aside, the painting seems to invite us to wonder what this woman is thinking and feeling.

Paul Mak: One thing I could say is that she might be wondering whether she'll be doing the same thing day in and day out for the rest of her life. And also maybe tapping into a little romance, maybe someone that she might be thinking of.

Dominic Carter: The heavily ornamented table also uses figures of women and natural forms, here as a decorative motif. It's in the Rococo Revival style then popular in the U.S. The table is attributed to Léon Alexandre Marcotte, who ran the New York end of a furniture business. His partner shuttled between New York and Paris to make sure that their clients had the very latest in French fashions.