



Camille Pissarro

(1830-1903)

Farm at Bazincourt

(Ferme à Bazincourt)

1884

Initial stamp bottom left: "C.P"

undated

Oil on canvas

h 54.1 cm x b 65.1 cm

WRM Dep. FC 693





Brief Report

This painting remained in the possession of the family after Camille Pissarro's death and only came on to the art market after 1921. It shows a large farmstead on the banks of the River Epte at Bazincourt, which was often depicted by the artist. Pissarro was able to see the building and the large walnut tree from the second floor of his own house [Pissarro/Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005]. The artist used a commercially stretched, very fine canvas in the standard F15 size F15 (54.0 x 65.0 cm) pre-primed with a standard cream ground (fig. 8). Before embarking on the painting, Pissarro planned the composition by making a detailed drawing in dark blue applied with a fine brush (figs 9, 10, 14), much of which can still be seen along the outlines of the motifs. His next step was to compose all the parts of the picture using a very open manner of painting, consisting of short, often curved and sometimes cruciform brush-strokes. The paints were applied wet-in-wet throughout. In many places the pale ground was left visible. It is precisely these places that at a later date were cursorily covered with predominantly greenish-blue brush-strokes in the foreground and in the trees, in a manner imitating the existing brushwork (figs 13, 15).

These additions were not carried out by Pissarro himself, however, as evidenced not only very clearly by the UV fluorescence photograph and false-colour IR reflectogram, but also by an illustration of the painting in a list of Pissarro's works that appeared in 1939, which shows that these changes had not yet been made at that date [Pissarro/Venturi 1939]. The manner and extent of the additions, carried out presumably only after 1939, suggest that this open painting technique and the frequent exposure of the pale ground were understood to be signs that the painting was incomplete, and that the additions were meant to rectify this. The fact that the coloration deviates from the original also points to the fact that someone was seeking to enliven the colours of the landscape as a whole. The initials in the bottom left-hand corner appear black, but are in fact dark blue, and on closer inspection can be seen to have been stamped. It is not known by whom this was done, or when, but it pre-dates the additions discussed above (present on the pre-1939 photo) (figs 7, 16).



Picture support canvas

Standard format	F15 (65.0 x 54.0 cm), horizontal
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	extremely fine weave with largely even yarn thickness, ranging from 0.2-0.4 mm; horizontal and vertical app. 34 threads per cm; vertical (weft?) threads are emphasized; Z twist (fig. 8)
Stretching	not original; re-stretched on account of lining; intervals between the original tacks range from app. 4.0-8.5 cm; this tacking was re-used and supplemented by additional tacks
Stretcher/strainer	stretcher with vertical centre-bar, probably authentic (fig. 2)
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.0 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	–
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	none visible on account of the lining



Ground

Sizing	present; presumably glutin size; with occasional microscopic bubbles (fig. 8)
Colour	white (yellowish), <i>Fr. jaune</i> (fig. 8)
Application	primed before cutting-to-size and stretching, thin, one or two layers
Binding medium	presumably oil
Texture	very even and homogeneous; pigmentation discernible under the microscope: mix of particles of yellow and red ochre of various sizes, fine black particles and in some places coarse lead-white particles (fig. 8); occasional holes in the ground discernible in places, due to bubbles in the size and the consequent inadequate wetting of the canvas [cf. Monet, WRM Dep. FC 673]

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	brush-drawing in thin blue paint, with a strikingly high proportion of admixed charcoal particles; it cannot be excluded that the brush-drawing was preceded by charcoal markings (figs 9, 10)
Extent/character	where the canvas has been left unpainted, it is easily visible with the naked eye or under the microscope, but not with IR reflectography (fig. 9); the whole composition is laid-in in detail (mapping, fig. 14); the cause of the charcoal component in the brush-drawing is uncertain: charcoal may have been mixed into weakly bound paint and became deposited to varying extents, or else Pissarro may have gone over, and intensified, very precise charcoal markings in blue paint with a brush; there are blue underdrawing lines with different proportions of charcoal particles, and also apparently unbound charcoal particles which became embedded in the subsequently applied paint-layer (fig. 10)
Pentimenti	–



Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

paint applied in the early Pointillist manner in short (1-3 cm) brushstrokes leaving the ground visible in numerous places; application wet-in-wet throughout; brushwork often diagonal or cruciform (fig. 12); paints often only blended on the canvas (fig. 11)

Painting tools

various brushes, on the fine side, with breadths ranging from 0.3-0.5 cm, probably tongue-shaped hair brushes

Surface structure

marked vertical structure of the canvas is further emphasized by the paint application; dabbing technique and viscous paint led to visible brushwork throughout, however impasto areas are few (fig. 3)

Palette

visual microscopic inspection reveals: white, medium yellow, medium red, dark red lake, medium blue, dark blue, pale green (milky); Vis spectrometry: chrome or cadmium yellow(?), vermilion, rose madder(?), ultramarine blue, viridian, copper-based green, cerulean (overpainting); EDX: zinc white, lead chromate, copper-based green (original yellow and green); cerulean blue, cobalt blue, cadmium yellow, artificial ultramarine blue, viridian (later blue-green additions)

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition

varnished, not authentic; remains of an earlier coating are discernible (figs 5, 7)



Signature/Mark

When?	initial-stamp “C.P.” in dark-blue, black-looking paint with a high proportion of very fine orange-red particles, applied at an unknown time but well after the original painting was completed (fig. 7)
Autograph signature	–
Serial	microscopic inspection reveals typical signs of a stamped signature, such as viscous paint being displaced or pulled upwards; corresponding categorization in the revised catalogue raisonné [Pissarro/Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005, p. 511]; it is not known who applied the stamp

Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

The canvas has been lined; the adhesive was also used to stick the turnover edge of the lining to the stretcher (figs 2, 8); a small dent in the background; numerous painted additions by someone other than the artist (see above, Brief Report) (figs 5, 6, 13, 15); only minor losses and abrasions in the paint-layer; fine craquelure, pronounced only in places.

Additional remarks

There is a mark on the right-hand edge of the picture caused by slippage before the paint was completely dry.



Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhib. cat. Cologne Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, 8 September - 9. December 2001), Cologne 2001, cat. no. 134, p. 302, with ill.
- Pissarro/Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005: Joachim Pissarro, Claire Durand-Ruel Snollaerts, *Pissarro, Critical Catalogue of Paintings*, vol. II, Paris/Milan 2005, no. 772, p. 511, with ill.
- Pissarro/Venturi 1939: Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, Lionello Venturi, *Camille Pissarro, son art, son œuvre*, Paris 1939, cat. no. 645, with ill.

Source of illustrations

Fig. 16: taken from Pissarro/Venturi 1939, vol. 2, cat. no. 645. A better-quality reproduction of the historic photograph of the picture before the painted additions by another hand was unfortunately impossible to obtain, as the Drouot archive in Paris, which has custody of the photograph, was in the process of moving when we made our enquiry.

All further illustrations & figures: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud

Examination methods used

- | | |
|--|--|
| ✓ Incident light | ✓ VIS spectrometry |
| ✓ Raking light | – Wood identification |
| – Reflected light | – FTIR (Fourier transform spectroscopy) |
| ✓ Transmitted light | ✓ EDX (Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis) |
| ✓ Ultraviolet fluorescence | – Microchemical analysis |
| ✓ Infrared reflectography | |
| ✓ False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| – X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

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Date: 1/2005

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Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso, lined



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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 3
Raking light

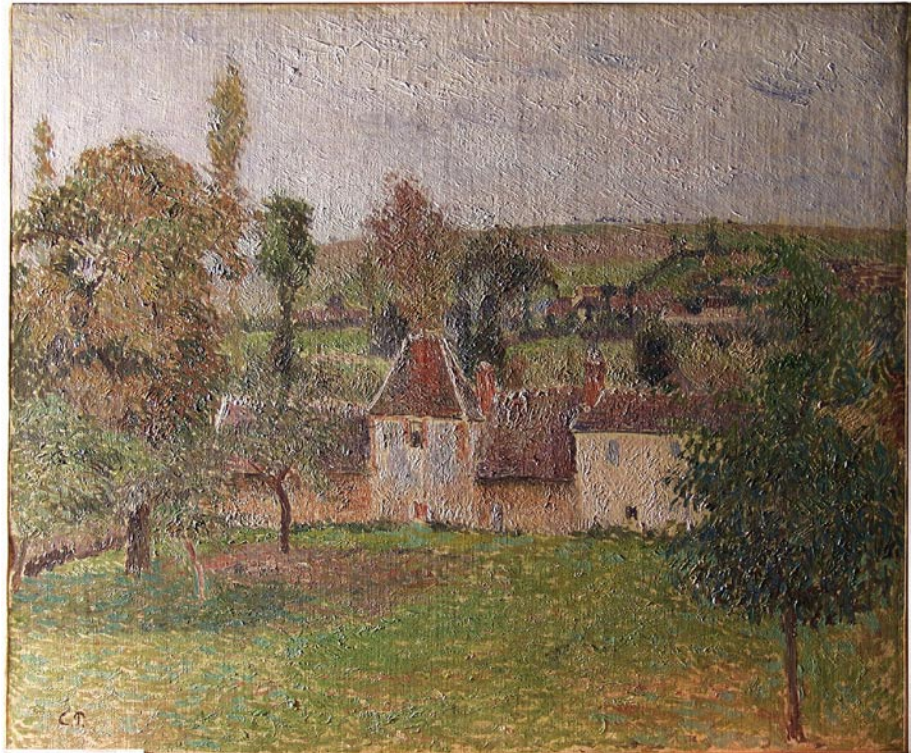


Fig. 4
Transmitted light





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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 5
UV fluorescence; the later additions are characterized by the turquoise fluorescence of the brushstrokes, predominantly in the foreground and in the trees



Fig. 6
False-colour IR reflectogram, the painted additions are represented here in magenta to violet





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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

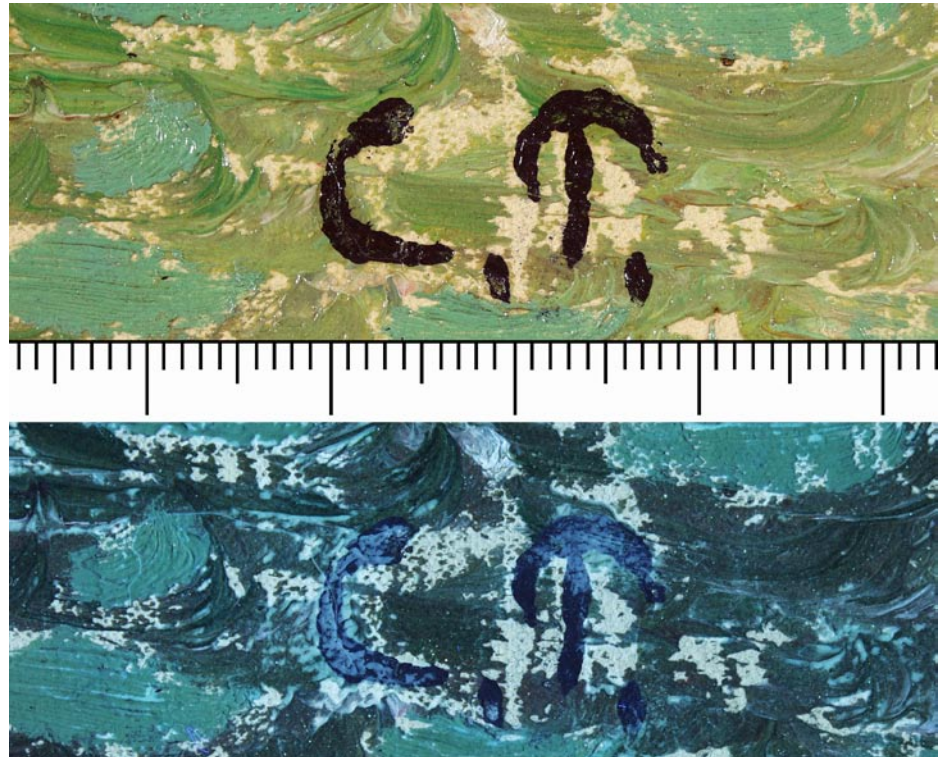


Fig. 7
Details, stamped initials
in incident light (top)
and under UV (bottom)

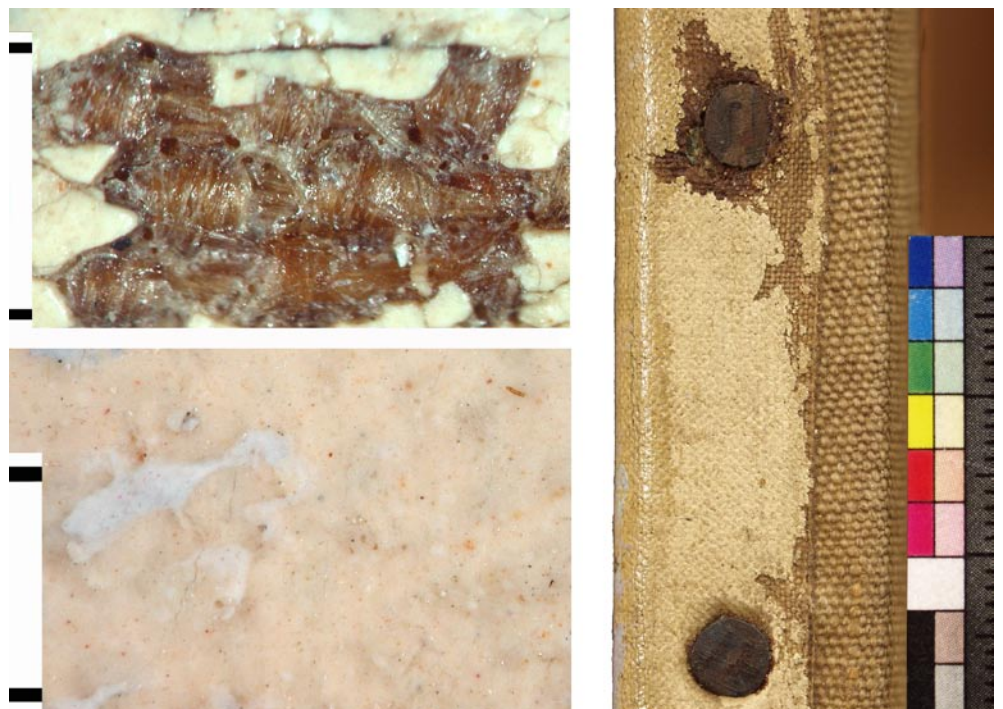


Fig. 8
Preparation of the
canvas: bubbles are
discernible in the size
(top left); cream-coloured
ground (bottom left),
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm); and detail
with the turnover edge
of the very fine canvas,
which was later lined (far
right)



Fig. 9
Underdrawing not covered by paint,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)

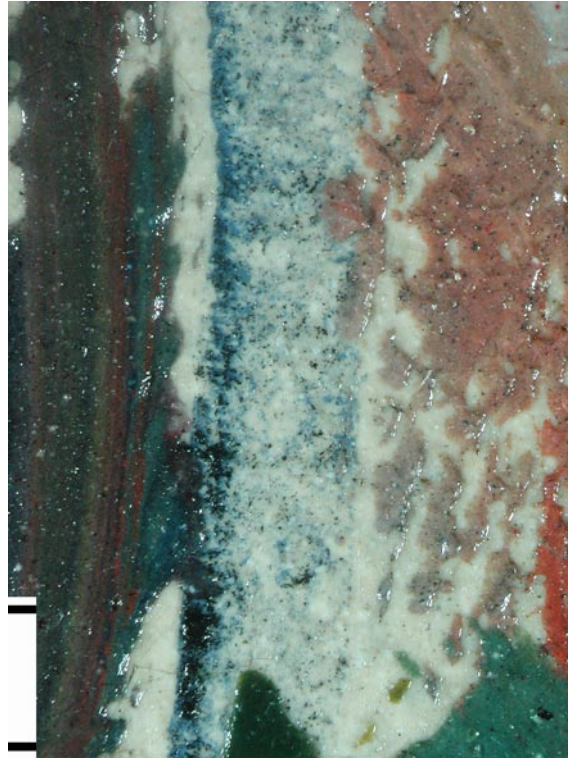
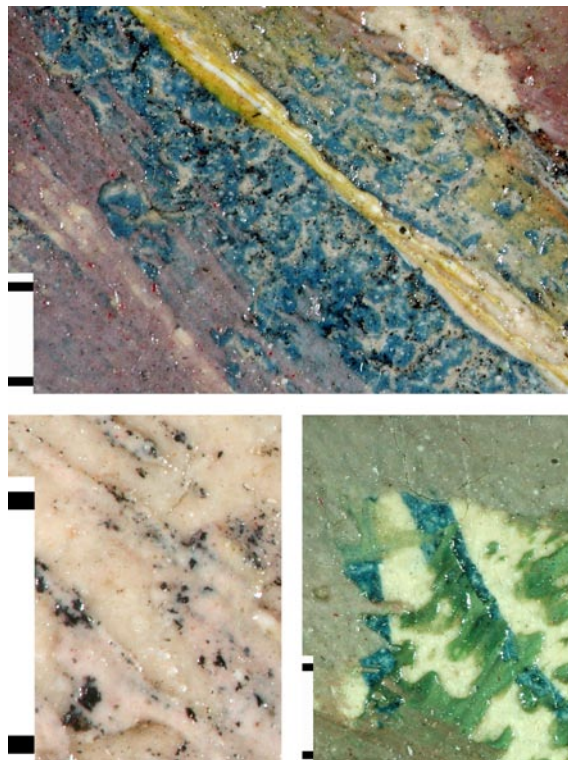


Fig. 10
Underdrawing lines,
charcoal particles
and blue paint are
mixed (top); the two
lower illustrations
however do not
exclude the possibility
of two independent
applications in two
phases, as both the
charcoal particles and
the blue brush-drawing
appear independently of
each other, microscopic
photograph (M = 1 mm)



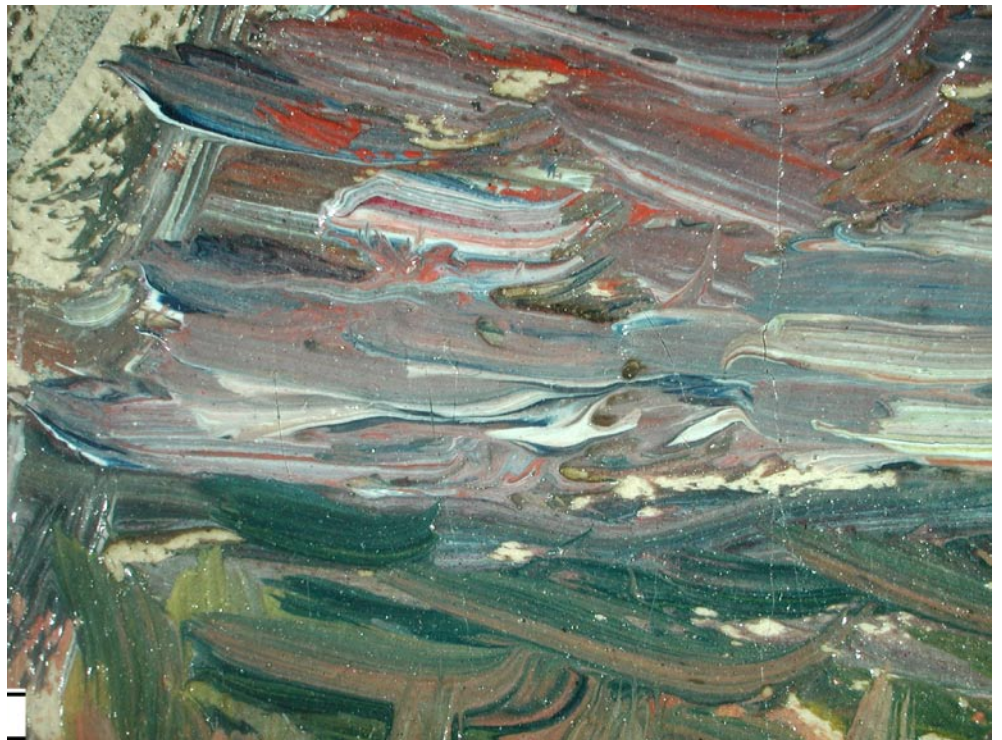


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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 11
Detail, horizon



Fig. 12
Impasto, wet-in-wet
paint application, micro-
scopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)





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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 13
Detail, paint applied in dots and dashes in the region of the tree; the various bluish-green brushstrokes are not by Pissarro (cf. figs 5, 6, 14, 15)



Fig. 14
Mapping of the underdrawing (in blue), to the extent that it is visible under the microscope and not covered by the subsequent painting





Camille Pissarro – Farm at Bazincourt
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 15
Mapping (in red) of
the later additions by
another hand



Fig. 16
Historic photograph
dating from pre-1939,
original state without
painted additions