



**Auguste Renoir**

(1841-1919)

**Landscape on the Banks  
of the Seine at Rueil**

(Paysage au bord  
de la Seine à Rueil)

1879

*signed and dated bottom left:  
"Renoir. 79"*

*Oil on poplar wood*

*h 37.3 cm x b 65.8 cm*

*WRM Dep. FC 790*





## Auguste Renoir – Landscape on the Banks of the Seine at Rueil

### Brief Report on Technology and Condition

#### Brief Report

Renoir's painting *Landscape on the Banks of the Seine at Rueil* remained in the possession of the artist's family for a long time and is one of the few pictures he painted on wood [Dauberville 2007, cat. no. 143]. The picture support is not a standard size, but rather somewhere between F12 Marine (38.0 x 60.0 cm) and F15 Marine (46.0 x 65.0 cm). Recto the marks left by planing the surface of the panel can be discerned under raking light (fig. 3). Almost in the middle of the top edge there is a thorn-like prick in the panel, which presumably results from a fastening either during manufacture or during the painting process (fig. 6). The indisputable finding that the panel is poplar wood is surprising; as in other works in the Wallraf collection, here too we have a drastic darkening of the wood (cf. for example Georges Seurat, *Street Scene*, 1883, WRM Dep. 822, Paul Signac, *St. Tropez, Calm*, 1895, WRM Dep. FC 683, Henry de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Fishing Boat*, 1885, WRM Dep. FC 719). This darkening is particularly evident where the panel has been left unpainted to reveal what is now the dark reddish brown of the unprimed wood; it now recalls a tropical hardwood such as mahogany rather than the originally pale poplar (fig. 8).

The visible painting was evidently executed without any further planning. Only in the bottom right-hand corner can one discern with the help of IR reflectography a few lines of a pencil drawing, which does not however belong to the picture (Abb. 7). Before Renoir filled out the areas of the picture with predominantly short brushstrokes of varying orientation, he partially covered the surface in both halves of the picture with opaque paints: yellow for the flower-meadow and white in the sky (fig. 9). These applications of paint were largely dry before the remaining work proceeded wet-in-wet (figs. 11, 12). As already in other works by Renoir, a pure black was also used here (fig. 13) [cf. Renoir, *Villeneuve-les-Avignon*, WRM Dep. FC 791, and Burnstock/Van den Berg/ House 2005, p. 54]. The likewise wet-in-wet signature evinces clear damage and retouching (fig. 5). As part of a far-reaching structural restoration measure, the original picture-support was cradled, while previously on both sides of the picture the panel was thinned and partially reinforced using liriiodendron (tulip-tree) wood (figs 2, 6).



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### Picture support panel

Standard format	not a standard size, but rather somewhere between F12 Marine (38.0 x 60.0 cm) and F15 Marine (46.0 x 65.0 cm); there are no indications that the panel was reduced to its present size from a previously standard format
Thickness	original panel: 0.6 cm (with cradling: max. 3.0 cm)
Type of wood	poplar ( <i>Populus sp.</i> )
Panel structure	consists of one board
Grain direction	horizontal
Cut of panel	tangential
Traces left by production/treatment	recto broad horizontal traces left by a plane (fig. 3); a round hole about 1 mm across almost in the middle of the top edge and an app. 2-mm wide irregular hole result from a fastening either during preparation of the panel, or during the painting process (fig. 6)
Producer's/dealer's marks	undetermined (verso treated and cradled)

### Ground

Sizing	uncertain
Colour	no ground present
Application	–
Binding medium	–
Character and appearance	–



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### Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	lead or graphite pencil(?)
Extent/character	no underdrawing can be discerned for the visible composition; a local pencil drawing/shading in the bottom right-hand corner, which is unrelated to the painting, is visible with the help of IR reflectography (fig. 9)
Pentimenti	–

### Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision	coloured opaque underpainting of both halves of the picture in white and luminous yellow in the region of the sky and the meadow in the foreground, however not everywhere, but revealing the unprimed panel in places (fig. 9); the horizontal middle region with river and buildings served as a separation zone between the meadow at the bottom and the sky at the top; in the region of the river the paint applications were merged in a soft and feathery fashion (figs 8, 10, 11); in the region of the horizon the brushwork is looser and more open, revealing the panel in a number of places (fig. 8); the figure executed in black paint was added on top of existing paint-layers wet-in-wet (fig. 13); the final paint applications seem to have been executed in red lake and dark blue in the meadow, including the signature
Painting tools	various brushes, (round) brushes with a breadth of 0.2 cm in the foreground to flat-ferrule brushes with a maximum breadth of 1.2 cm in the region of the horizon
Surface structure	brushwork clearly visible throughout, structure varies from smooth to heavily impasto applications in the white blends in the sky (fig. 3)
Palette	microscopic inspection reveals: white, pale yellow, bright yellow, ochre, red lake (orange UV-fluorescence), reddish-violet, medium green, dark blue, black Vis spectrometry: cadmium(?) and/or chrome(?) yellow, iron-oxide yellow, vermilion(?), cochineal(?), cobalt violet(?), copper-based green(?), cobalt blue, ultramarine blue
Binding mediums	presumably oil



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### Surface finish

Authenticity/condition not authentic; varnished, remains of an older coat are present

### Signature/Mark

When? signature and date bottom left: "Renoir. 79."; in dark-blue paint with a pointed brush, applied wet-in-wet to the underlying yellowish-green layer; extensive and elaborate restorative changes have been made within the inscription for reasons unknown; the following features may be said to be authentic: the start of the capital "R", the dot on the "i", and the "r" at the end of the name; the only original parts of the date are probably the top stroke of the "7" and the final stop (fig. 5); the condition can be seen particularly well using IR reflectography and false-colour IR reflectography (not under UV stimulation)

Autograph signature accords with autograph signatures by Renoir at this period

Serial –

### Frame

Authenticity not original

### State of preservation

Two horizontal cracks in the middle of the panel about 15–22 cm in length, short split in the corner of the picture top left; flat deal cradle (*Picea sp.*), stained dark, consisting of six horizontal (parallel with the grain) battens (breadth of the battens varies from 2.0–3.6 cm, thickness 1.3 cm, at intervals of 3–3.5 cm) glued on to the edges of the panel and seven vertical battens inserted between the panel and the horizontal battens likewise of softwood (breadth 3.8 cm, thickness 0.8 cm); along the left and right-hand sides the original panel was reduced in thickness by 2.5 mm and a strip of tulip-tree wood (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) app. 6.0 cm in breadth and 2.5 mm in thickness inserted; it is not now possible to work out the reason for this measure, possibly there is some connexion with the circular holes which have also led to losses in the paint-layer; extensive retouching in the signature (see Signature, above), in which region the major losses in the painting are to be found; further retouching along the tear and occasionally in the periphery.



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#### Additional remarks

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#### Source of illustrations

All illustrations and figures Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud

#### 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. 141, p. 320, with ill.
- Burnstock/ Van den Berg/ House: Aviva Burnstock, Klaas Jan van den Berg, John House, *Painting techniques of Pierre-Auguste Renoir: 1868-1919*, in: *Art Matters*, Netherlands technical studies in art, Zwolle 2005, 47-65
- Dauberville 2007: Guy-Patrice and Michel Dauberville, *Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles, 1858-1881*, Paris 2007, cat. no. 143, p. 202, with ill.

#### 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                     |  |

Author of examination: Katja Lewerentz

Date: 2/2005

Author of brief report: Katja Lewerentz

Date: 11/2008





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Fig. 1  
Recto



Fig. 2  
Verso, cradled





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Fig. 3  
Raking light (light source  
at top)



Fig. 4  
UV fluorescence







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Fig. 5  
Detail, signature in incident light, applied wet-in-wet, as IR reflectogram (top left) and photographed under the microscopic (M = 1 mm, top right); losses in the inscription have been meticulously retouched (arrows)

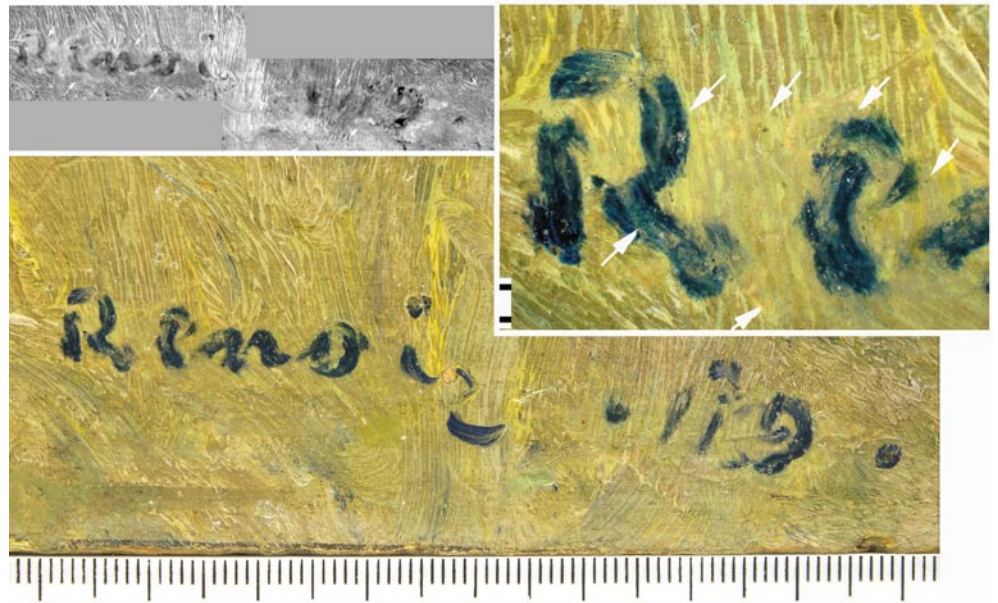
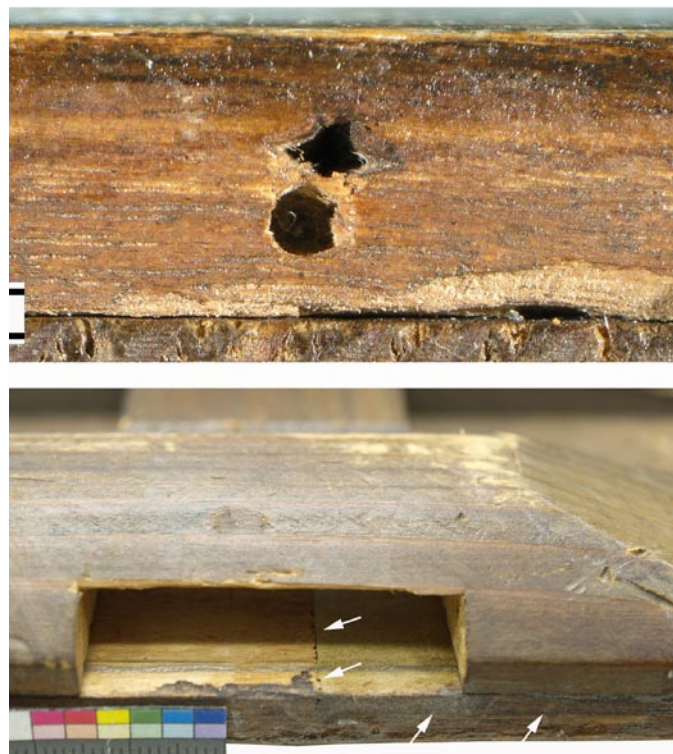


Fig. 6  
Details, panel: traces of a fastening (top), treatment by cradling and lateral addition to the panel (bottom, arrows)





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Fig. 7  
Detail of the bottom  
right-hand corner: IR  
reflectogram reveals  
locally present pencil  
drawing unrelated to the  
picture

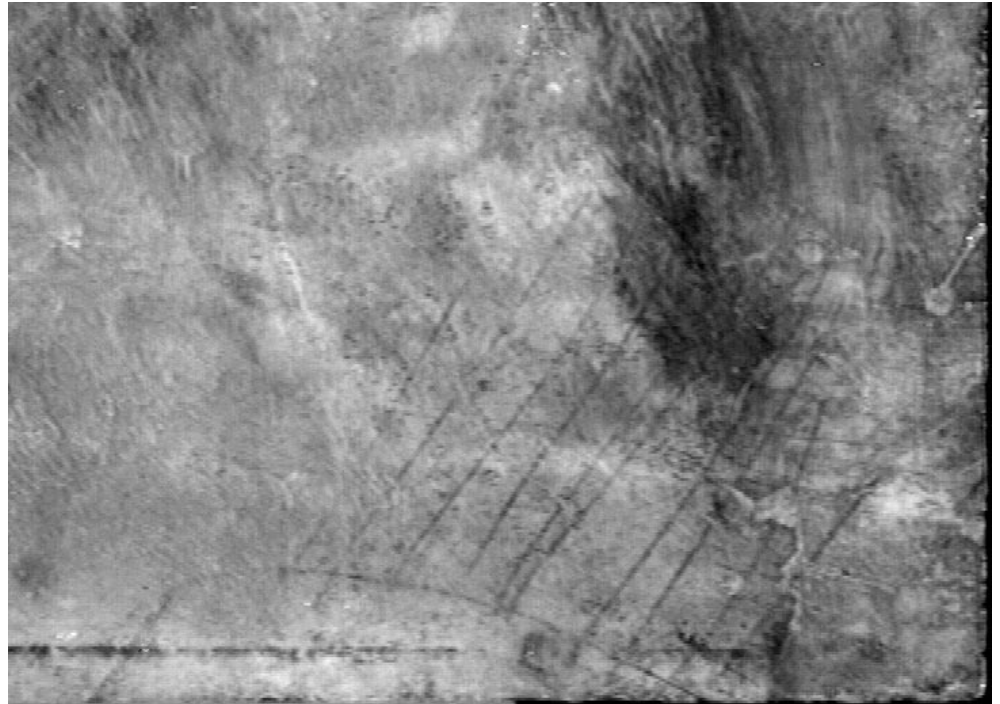


Fig. 8  
Detail, wood of the panel  
visible in places left  
unpainted (arrows)







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Fig. 9  
Partially applied  
coloured underlay in  
white (left) and yellow  
(right), microscopic  
photographs (M = 1 mm)

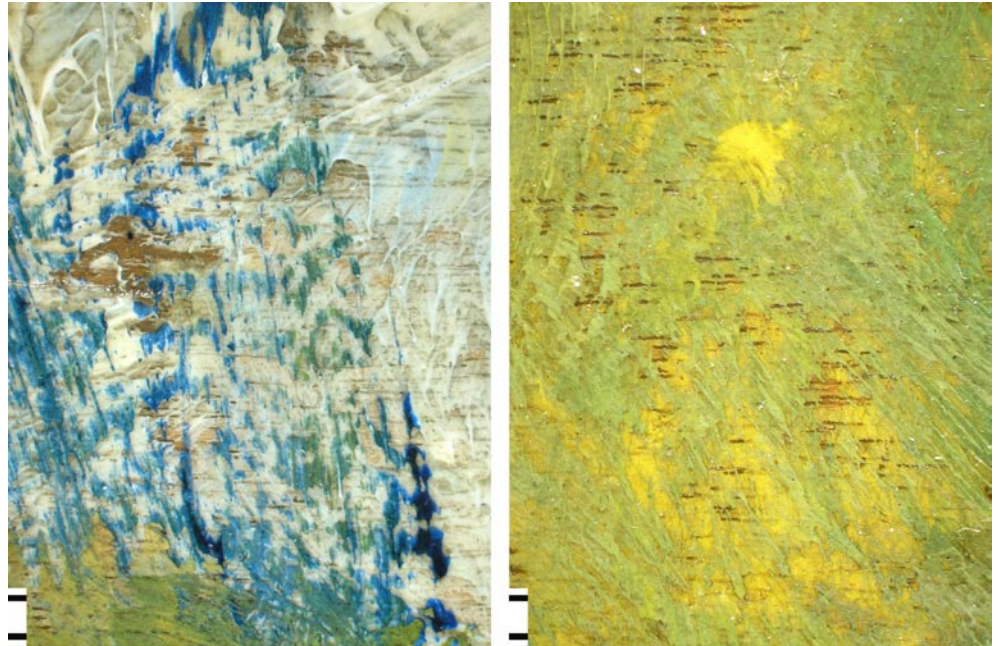


Fig. 10  
Detail, wet-in-wet paint  
applications of varying  
consistency





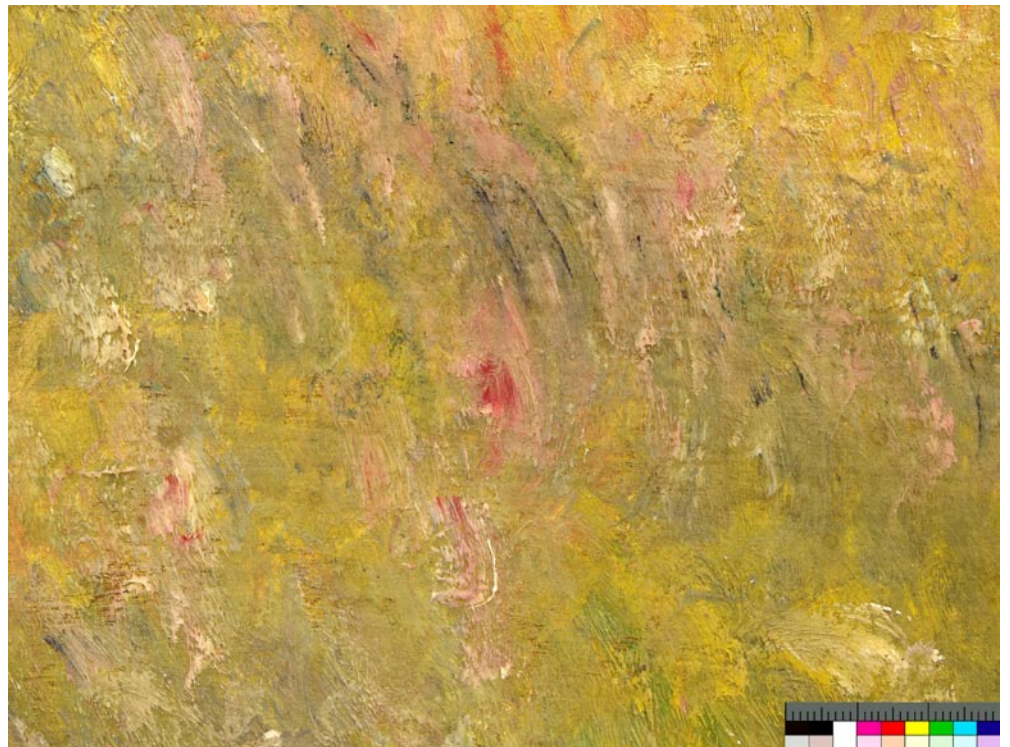


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Fig. 11  
Wet-in-wet paint  
applications, applied  
both vertically and  
horizontally, microscopic  
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12  
Detail, dashed, heavily  
condensed paint  
applications in the  
region of the meadow







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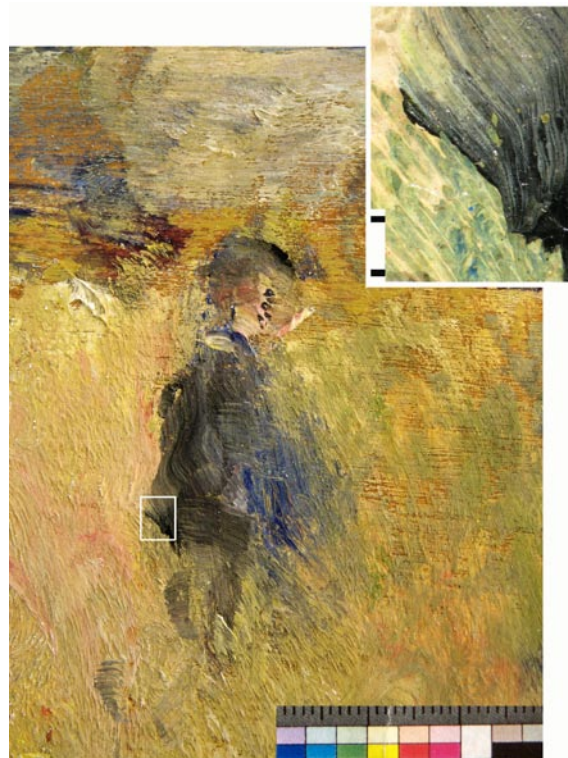


Fig. 12

Detail, Renoir sometimes used black paint, which most other Impressionists had largely banished from their palette, to be seen here in the right-hand figure, top right microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)