



Frédéric Bazille

(1841-1870)

Young Woman among Grapevines

(Jeune femme dans les vignes)

1869

*signed and dated bottom right:
"F. Bazille / Montpellier 1869"*

Oil on artists' board

h 27.0 cm x b 34.9 cm

WRM Dep. 811





Brief Report

According to the signature, Bazille painted the study, depicting a young woman in the midst of vines, in his home town of Montpellier in 1869. The same year he painted the two-part work *Études pour une vendange* (*Studies for a grape harvest*) with a similar subject and use of colour [Schulmann 1995, p. 197, cat. no. 54]. The present small sketch was executed by Bazille on a commercially prepared artists' board primed in white. The picture support, with rounded corners, in the standard F5 size has the format stamp verso (fig. 2). The paint applications do not cover the whole area of the board, but run out towards the corners. The artist underscores the basic function of the pale ground for the light and colour effects by leaving numerous unpainted areas between the brushstrokes.

In addition, in two places in the foreground he has scraped small areas, where the paint was evidently applied too dense, free of paint right back to the ground (fig. 10). The brushwork is visible throughout, and is highly varied, while the paints were invariably applied wet-in-wet, all of which lead to the conclusion that the paint was of a pasty, viscous consistency (figs 7-9). It is open to question whether the robustness and the obviously short drying times of his paints were due to the addition of a siccativ, or whether this was the inevitable result of working in hot weather in the south of France, presumably *en plein air*. Only the signature appears to have been added after the rest of the painting had already dried (fig. 5).



Picture support board

Standard format	F5 (35.0 x 27.0 cm) horizontal, verso stamp with the figure “5” (fig. 2)
Thickness	2.0 mm
Characteristics	couched board whose nature cannot be determined in any greater detail, consisting of very fine, evenly distributed albeit non-directional fibrous material; number of layers cannot be determined, as they are too strongly compressed (fig. 5); recto one can discern a fine mesh structure running perpendicular to the picture format
Color	pale natural colour
Manufacture/modification	artists’ board; rounded corners and format stamp verso are evidence of its commercial origin (fig. 2)
Producer’s/dealer’s marks	–

Ground

Sizing	undetermined
Colour	off white
Application	presumably in two layers; possibly applied before board was cut to size, as the ground extends all the way to the sides of the board and there is no superfluous material on the edges; fine, horizontal brushstrokes
Binding medium	presumably oil
Character and appearance	smooth and fine with homogeneous distribution of the material; fine black and yellow-ochre particles can be discerned under the microscope (fig. 6)



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Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique none present

Extent/character –

Pentimenti –

Paint layer

Paint application/technique
and artist's own revision

paint applications evidently proceeded from top to bottom and from left to right, albeit with repeated revisions and further concentration of the painting; highly varied brushwork, partly geared to the motif: from wavy brushstrokes in the region of the sky to arc-shaped or crossed strokes, or sometimes dabs, for the foliage and the figure (figs. 8, 11); the paints were applied wet-in-wet throughout, but what is striking is their particularly viscous consistency, but at the same time the fact that they dried extraordinarily quickly, due possibly to the influence of the hot weather in the south of France, or to the addition of a siccative (figs. 8, 9)

Painting tools presumably flat-ferrule bristle brushes, varying in breadth from 3-10 mm, mainly 7-8 mm

Surface structure brushwork very apparent throughout; paint consistency during the work process evidently pasty, highly viscous and robust (fig. 7)

Palette visual microscopic inspection reveals: two pale yellows, yellow ochre, yellowish-orange, dark red, two blues, dark green in numerous blends
VIS spectrometry: chrome yellow(?)/cadmium yellow(?), zinc-yellow(?), cochineal(?)/vermilion(?)/ironoxide red(?), cobalt blue, ultramarine(?), viridian

Binding mediums presumably oil, with possible addition of a siccative



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Surface finish

Authenticity/condition	varnished, not authentic
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Signature/Mark

When?	undetermined; applied to the dried paint layer in dark-brown paint with a pointed brush; whether this is due to the quick drying of the paint at the time of execution, or whether the signature was added later, is uncertain; parts of the signature seem to have been covered with a pale glaze, for reasons unknown but probably not by the artist (fig. 4)
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Autograph signature	presumably
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Serial	–
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Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

The picture support bulges slightly outward; major, but well-restored, damage in the top left-hand corner (fig. 3), the other corners once showed slight signs of fanning out; impasto areas slightly squashed and abraded; partial superficial whitish efflorescences from green and brown paint layers (figs. 4, 12), possibly due to damp and maybe linked to the water stains visible verso (fig. 2); signature abraded by inexpert surface cleaning/varnish removal, and evidently for reasons unknown partially glazed over by someone other than the artist (fig. 4).



Examination methods used

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|--|--|
| ✓ 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 | – Cross-section |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| – X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

Literature

- Blühm 2008: Andreas Blühm (ed.), Meister des Impressionismus, Die Kölner Sammlung, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne 2008, p. 49 (with ill.), p. 287
- Schulman 1995: Michel Schulmann, Frédéric Bazille 1841-1870, Catalogue raisonné, Peintures – Dessins, pastels, aquarells, Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa correspondance, Paris 1995, p. 197, no. 54

Source of illustrations

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

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Fig. 1
Recto

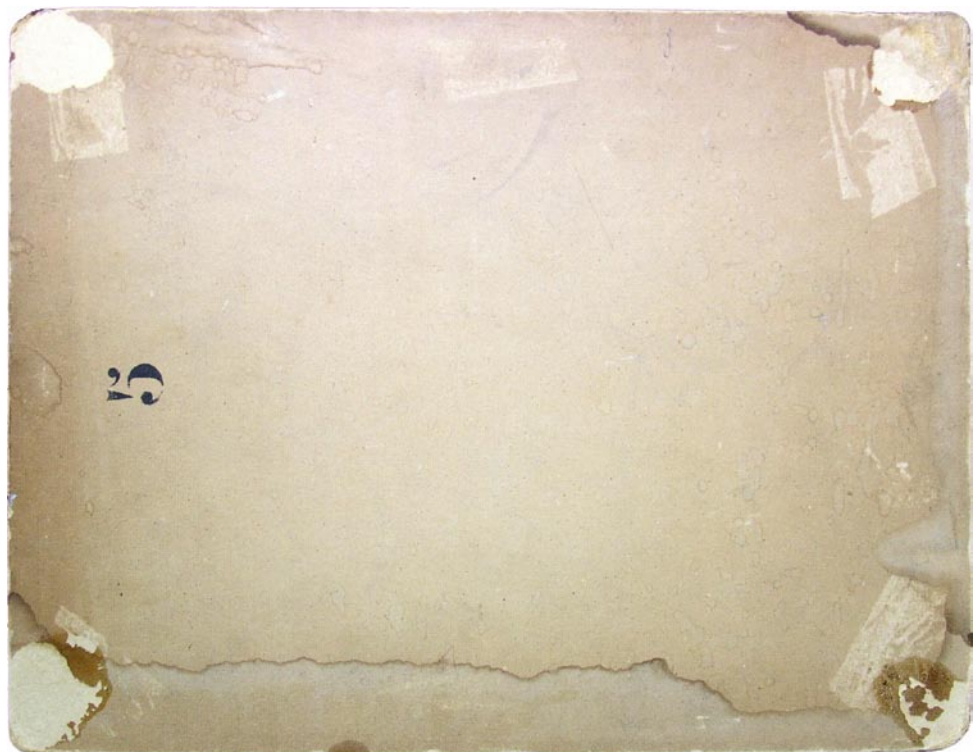


Fig. 2
Verso with format stamp



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Fig. 3
UV-fluorescence



Fig. 4
Detail, signature and date, partially glazed, presumably not by the artist, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



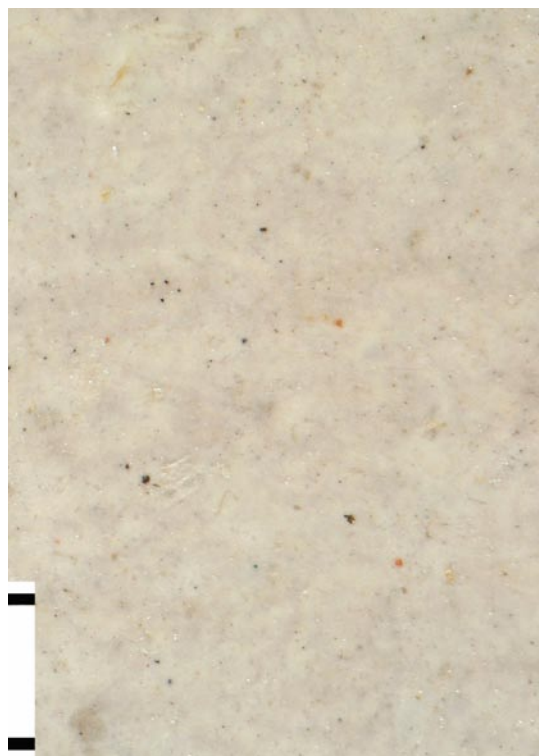
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Fig. 5
Artists' board picture
support, lower edge,
side view, microscopic
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 6
Off-white ground
with discernible
pigmentation,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)





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Fig. 7
Detail, lively surface
structure in raking light.



Fig. 8
Detail, varied brushwork



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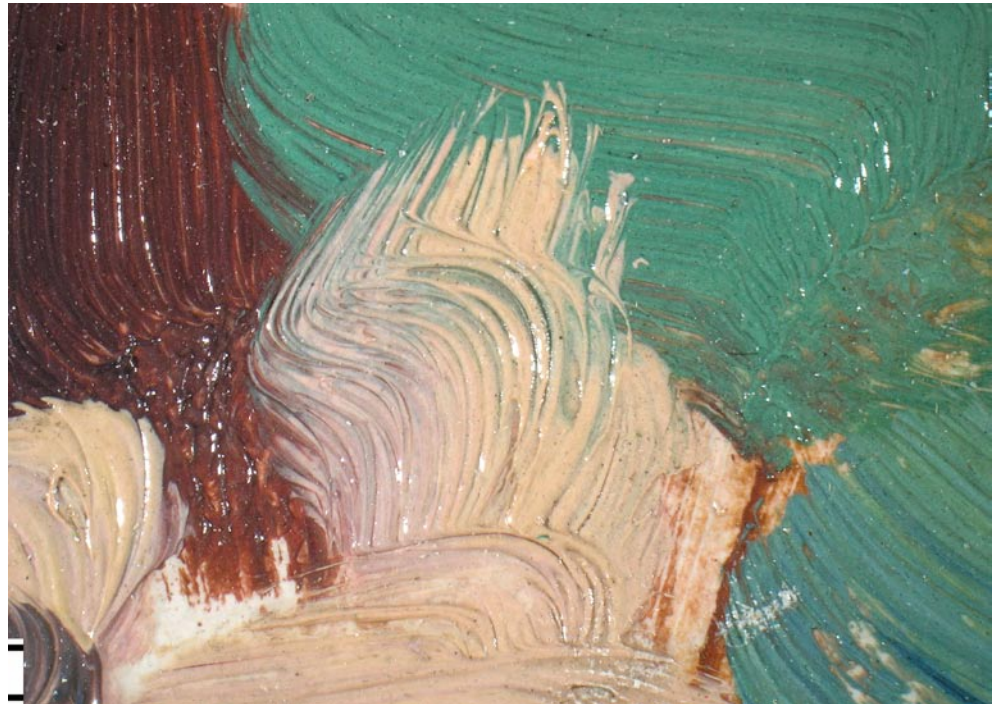


Fig. 9
Wet-in-wet paint of a very firm, quick-drying paint, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10
Detail, brown paint, partially scraped-off in order to incorporate the pale ground more strongly into the total colour scheme, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



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Fig. 11
Detail, applications of
green paint, based on
blends of only one green
pigment, according
to VIS spectrometry,
viridian



Fig. 12
Pale efflorescence on
green, microscopic
photograph (M = 1 mm)

