Paul Cézanne
(1839-1906)

Landscape near Aix-en-Provence
(Paysage à Aix-en-Provence)

c. 1879
unsigned and undated
Oil on canvas
h 46.2 cm x b 55.3 cm
WRM Dep. FC 658
This picture of a Provençal landscape in green, ochre and brownish-violet tones was acquired direct from the artist [Rewald 1996, Vollard Photo Archive no. 333] by Ambroise Vollard, who organized the first major Cézanne exhibition in 1895. Not only the numerous trees in the foreground, of which only the trunks were painted, but also the extent of the exposed grey ground, draw attention to the fact that this painting was abandoned by Cézanne at an early stage and, as a painting, is to be regarded as unfinished. The demarcation between paint applications and ground is particularly easy to see under UV radiation (fig. 4). For the majority of his works in the 1870s and 80s Cézanne used tinted grounds, for example in crème, ton clair, gris or écru [Callen 2000, p. 81] and Rewald thinks he recognizes the same grey ground in a further work by Cézanne dating from the same year [Rewald 1996, no. 409, vol. 1, p. 271]. Unfinished paintings often allow a very direct insight into the work of an artist, and in Cézanne’s work and life the unfinished almost became the characteristic feature of his work [exhib. cat. Cézanne, Vollendet Unvollendet, 1999].

In this work, therefore, we have a good opportunity of following the individual work phases. He prepared the composition very precisely on the loosely woven, pre-primed canvas (fig. 6) in the standard F10 size with an extensive and detailed underdrawing, as we often see in his work at this period. He used a lead or graphite pencil to sketch all the important elements of the picture. Next he went over all the contours with a thin brush in wet-in-wet paint applications suggest that the painterly execution was completed in a single session. Cézanne started by increasingly covering the whole area of the picture both with thin, block-like applications of paint and demarcating these with a hatching, frequently diagonal, of fine brush-strokes (figs. 9, 11). It is worthwhile comparing this painting with the more finished Landscape to the West of Aix-en-Provence (WRM 3188), a further Cézanne in the Wallraf collection, and one with a similar motif, which was painted eight years later.
### Picture support canvas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard format</strong></td>
<td>F 10 horizontal (55.0 x 46.0 cm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weave</strong></td>
<td>tabby weave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canvas characteristics</strong></td>
<td>very open weave with threads of uneven thickness, app. 10 threads per cm in horizontal and vertical, similar to the toile pochade or toile étude grades supplied by dealers (fig. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretching</strong></td>
<td>not authentic, foldover edges cut back and stuck down; current stretching goes back to an early lining of the canvas, as the sticking down of the latter, and the subsequent stickers demonstrate; original stretching with nail intervals of 6-8 cm is evidenced by stretchmarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretcher/strainer</strong></td>
<td>stretcher with cross bars, authenticity undetermined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretcher/strainer depth</strong></td>
<td>2.0 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traces left by manufacture/processing</strong></td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manufacturer's/dealer's marks</strong></td>
<td>undetermined, stretcher has a number of stickers all round; one label of Foinet-Lefebvre, known as an art-supplies dealer, in the middle of the cross has a four-digit number which probably points to his other activities as a transporter and gallery-owner, and seems to have been applied in a different context (fig. 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sizing</th>
<th>not determined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>grey (similar to gris clair or gris foncé)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>probably prior to cutting-to-size and stretching; one or at most two layers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binding medium</td>
<td>presumably semi-oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>very even, homogeneous and thin layer; microscopic inspection reveals numerous mostly sharp-edged particles, varying in shape and size, of a black pigment, individual very large, round lead-white(?) particles and accumulations of large yellow and fine red particles (fig. 7); dominant, square, crack formation, typical of loosely woven canvas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium/technique</th>
<th>multi-stage compositional lay-in with pencil and pointed brush, which, as a result of the fact that the paint was applied thinly and not all over, can be seen both with IR reflectography and using a stereo-microscope (figs. 5, 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. graphite or lead pencil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. semi-transparent brush underdrawing in brownish-grey and blue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent/character</td>
<td>complete lay-in of the picture is comprehensively represented in the underdrawing; the first pencil sketch of the pictorial idea only touched the highest parts of the primed canvas (fig. 8); twofold reinforcement in paint of the lay-in through outlining and accentuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentimenti</td>
<td>all of the tree-trunks in the underdrawing were left blank when the green paint was applied, with the exception of the second tree from the left; here Cézanne departed from his plan and painted over the trunk in green; only in the course of painting did he return to the original underdrawn lay-in of the tree-trunk, curiously though without giving it any crown or foliage (fig. 9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Paint layer

**Paint application/technique and artist’s own revision**

The underdrawing was followed quickly, and presumably in a single session, by the first applications of paint, as can be seen from the fact that all the paints were applied wet-in-wet and mixed as a result; the paints were predominantly dilute and applied semi-transparently: this is true in particular of the greens; the paint was applied partly in large horizontal areas, but partly in short dashes, mostly diagonal or vertical, but sometimes also in arcs (fig. 12); overlaps in the paint of the sky on to the landscape show that the pale top third of the picture was applied at a late stage.

**Painting tools**

Predominantly fine-pointed brushes or brushes with tongue-shaped ends measuring 0.1-0.5 cm across (figs. 11, 12).

**Surface structure**

Hardly any impasto areas, as the paint, often applied in short dashes, was strongly diluted.

**Palette**

Visual microscopic inspection reveals: white, ochre yellow, medium yellow, medium red, dark red lake, dark blue, dark green, medium green.

VIS spectrometry: iron-oxide yellow, chrome or cadmium yellow(?), vermilion(?), ultramarine(?), viridian, copper-based green pigment(?). (fig. 10)

**Binding mediums**

Presumably oil.

### Surface finish

**Authenticity/Condition**

Varnished, not authentic.
### Signature/Mark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When?</th>
<th>no signature present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autograph signature</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial</td>
<td>–</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authenticity</th>
<th>not authentic</th>
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</table>

### State of preservation

Very stiff and brittle paste(?) lining with visible pressure on the paint-layer, which has affected the original surface structure (fig. 3); the lining canvas has 20 threads per cm vertical, 17 threads per cm horizontal; thickness of threads 0.3-0.5 mm, Z-twist; in some places strong abrasion by previous restoration (varnish removal/surface cleaning); retouching along the bottom edge of the picture on the right.

### Additional remarks

As there are large areas of similarity both in the manner of execution and in the state of preservation of the early lining between this painting and the second Cézanne landscape in the Wallraf collection (WRM 3188), the lining measure may well be due to Vollard's possession of the two pictures. Vollard apparently attached great importance to robust materials, as can be deduced from the correspondence between him and Gauguin [Christensen 1993, p. 68]. It is also known that, for example, directly after purchasing them in 1893 Gauguin himself lined, or had lined, pictures by Cézanne that he acquired for his own collection [Rewald 1996, vol. 1 , p. 271]. It may be that paintings on these simple netlike canvases in particular were subjected to this measure at an early stage.
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**Brief Report on Technology and Condition**

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**Literature**

- Cézanne, Vollendet - Unvollendet, exhib. cat., Vienna/Zürich 1999

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**Source of illustrations**

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

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**Examination methods used**

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

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**Author of examination:** Katja Lewerentz  
**Date:** 04/2007  
**Author of brief report:** Katja Lewerentz  
**Date:** 04/2008
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Fig. 1
Recto

Fig. 2
Verso
Fig. 3
Raking light

Fig. 4
UV fluorescence
Fig. 5
IR reflectogram

Fig. 6
Detail of the bottom right-hand corner, raking light, netlike canvas structure
Fig. 7
Grey ground, easily recognizable pigmentation and dominant craquelure, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

Fig. 8
Multistage under-drawing in pencil (lead or graphite) followed by dilute paint, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)
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Fig. 9
Foreground with first lay-in in paint of the tree-trunks

Fig. 10
Mixed-green paint-layer with two different pigmentations; VIS spectrometry clearly suggests a copper-based green (1) and viridian (2), microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)
Fig. 11
Applications of green with varying brushwork, dense dashes and with diagonal brush movements, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

Fig. 12
Arc-like brush-strokes in echelon in incident and moderate raking light, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)