



**Camille Pissarro**

(1830-1903)

**Orchard in Varengeville**

(Un clos à Varengeville)

1899

*signed and dated bottom left:  
"C. Pissarro. 99"*

*Oil on canvas*

*h 46.5 cm x b 55.7 cm*

*WRM Dep. 850*





## Brief Report

This is one of a total of eight paintings which Camille Pissarro brought back to Eragny after his six-week stay in Varengeville in the late summer of 1899 [Pissarro/Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005, p. 797, cat. no. 1293, p. 800]. For the depiction of the orchard Pissarro chose a standard F10-size canvas pre-primed in pale grey and pre-stretched. Like many of the Impressionists, Pissarro had no problems with turning this format, actually designed for portraits, through 90 degrees in order to have a horizontal canvas on which to paint a landscape (fig.1). The stretcher, which is probably original, bears the registration mark of the Bourgeois Ainé firm, while the canvas verso bears the stencilled mark of the Parisian firm P. Contet (fig. 7). A particular feature of the painting method is the use of short, often semicircular brushstrokes, applied either wet-in-wet or wet-on-dry. For the first lay-in of the composition, for which there may have been no preparatory drawing, Pissarro applied the paint thinly, thus indicating the basic

colours and shapes. As he progressed, the paint covered more and more of the surface and increased in pastosity. This is true not only of the pale blends, but also for the dark-green of the foliage of the trees (fig.3). To all appearances, Pissarro decided only at a late stage to include the cow in the foreground, as betrayed by the fact that there is green paint beneath, which elsewhere was not applied where other objects, e.g. tree-trunks, were planned. In spite of largely dense applications of paint in and on top of each other, the pale-grey ground remains visible between individual brushstrokes (fig. 8). In the composition these visible patches of ground create highlights, while their increasing presence in the peripheral regions represent a repeated characteristic of impressionistically captured impressions of nature. Not least for this reason it may be presumed that Pissarro painted this picture on the spot. Evidently satisfied with what he had created, he signed the picture immediately on completing it (fig. 6).



## Picture support canvas

Standard format	F10 (55.0 x 46.0 cm), horizontal
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical 26 threads, horizontal 30 threads per cm; yarn thickness app. 0.3-0.5 mm; Z-twist
Stretching	the current stretching represents the second stretching of this canvas, but is oriented very largely to the attachment points of the first stretching; regular tacking intervals ranging from app. 3 cm to a maximum of 4.5 cm
Stretcher/strainer	authentic, stretcher with vertical centre bar; corner joints with double slits; centre bar attached with mortise-and-tenon joint; the frame can be tightened by wedges in both directions
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.0 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	fine markings in the corners indicating the grooves for the wedges were to be cut
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	stretcher centre-bar verso: weakly struck mark in black paint of the firm Bourgeois Aîné "Modèle Déposé", with a "B" below in a lozenge (fig. 7); on the canvas verso is a stencilled inscription in black paint: "[top line illegible] / P. Contet / Paris / 54, Rue Lafayette, 54" (fig. 7); the firm's mark, more or less centred in the top half of the standard Figure (portrait) format, is, because the canvas has been turned through 90 degrees, now also turned through 90 degrees, and is in the left-hand half of the canvas (fig. 2)



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## Ground

Sizing	present and visible in places as a thin, porous layer
Colour	pale grey
Application	ground applied before the canvas was cut to size or stretched, thin, one or two layers
Binding medium	presumably oil
Texture	very even and homogeneous; the warm tone results from a mixture of red-ochre particles of varying sizes, occasionally also of yellow ochre, fine black pigment and in places coarse-grained white-lead pigment (fig. 8)

## Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	–
Extent/character	no hint of any compositional planning drawing is detectable, either by microscopy or IR reflectography
Pentimenti	–



## Paint layer

### Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

largely wet-in-wet or wet-on-wet; paints applied either in pure form or blended; occasionally paints of different colour, on the brush at the same time, blended only on the canvas (fig. 11); brushwork consists of loose dashes, dabs and diagonal crosses (green area at the right-hand edge), sometimes following the shape of the motif (tree-trunk, roof surfaces of the house); the first compositional lay-in with thin opaque applications of paint, which in the grass region also covered the area later occupied by the cow (fig. 9); the individual regions and motifs were worked on alternately and the paint applications became steadily more concentrated; the final brush-strokes are marked by increased pastosity (e.g. foliage of the trees, cow's back); the pale-grey ground is only occasionally visible between the individual brush-strokes (figs 8, 10)

### Painting tools

app. 5-mm-wide bristle(?) brush

### Surface structure

very variable: on the left-hand side of the picture, dominated by the groups of trees, the predominant structure is impasto in the green region; elsewhere the paint is more stretched and therefore more dense

### Palette

visual microscopic inspection reveals: white, medium yellow, pale reddish-orange, raspberry red lake, dark blue, medium green (milky-transparent), dark, transparent green  
Vis spectrometry: chrome yellow(?) and/or cadmium yellow(?), vermilion, red lake (not definable), ultramarine blue, copper-based green, viridian, chrome green (= chrome yellow + Prussian blue)(?)

### Binding mediums

presumably oil

## Surface finish

### Authenticity/Condition

the present varnish is not authentic, as beneath it there are remains of an older, darkened, browned coating



### Signature/Mark

When?	immediately or shortly after the completion of the painting (fig. 6)
Autograph signature	certain, since the inscription "C. Pissarro. 99" was written with a brush in dark-blue paint with a high proportion of red lake wet-in-wet in the bottom left-hand corner (fig. 6)
Serial	–

### Frame

Authenticity	not original
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### State of preservation

Considerable tensions in the canvas have led to wide-open craquelures and formation of hollows in the paint-layer, whose negative structures are clearly visible on the fabric verso (fig. 13); possibly it was this observation that led to the canvas being coated verso at some unknown time in the past with a transparent, yellowish substance (probably starch paste, possibly also glutin size), in order to achieve consolidation of the paint-layer recto, which was becoming detached from the canvas; occasional fillings and retouches (fig. 5), abrasions all round the periphery; partial losses on the edges of raised areas in the paint-layer; partial changes in the green paint, reminiscent of blanching and presumably due to processes of chemical change (fig. 12); reddish-brown and probably also browned remains of a coating in the crevices of impasto paint applications (figs 12, 14).

### Additional remarks

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## 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, no cat. no., p. 436, with ill.
- Pissarro/ Durand-Ruel Snollaerts 2005: Joachim Pissarro, Claire Durand-Ruel Snollaerts, *Pissarro, Critical Catalogue of Paintings*, 2005 Paris/Milan, vol. III, cat. no. 1293 (under the title *Verger à Varengeville avec vache/ The Orchard and a Cow, Varengeville*), with ill.

## Source of illustrations

All illustrations and 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                     |  |

Author of examination: Katja Lewerentz  
Author of brief report: Iris Schaefer

Date: 01/2005  
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Fig. 1  
Recto



Fig. 2  
Verso, with dealer's and  
manufacturer's marks  
(see fig. 7)



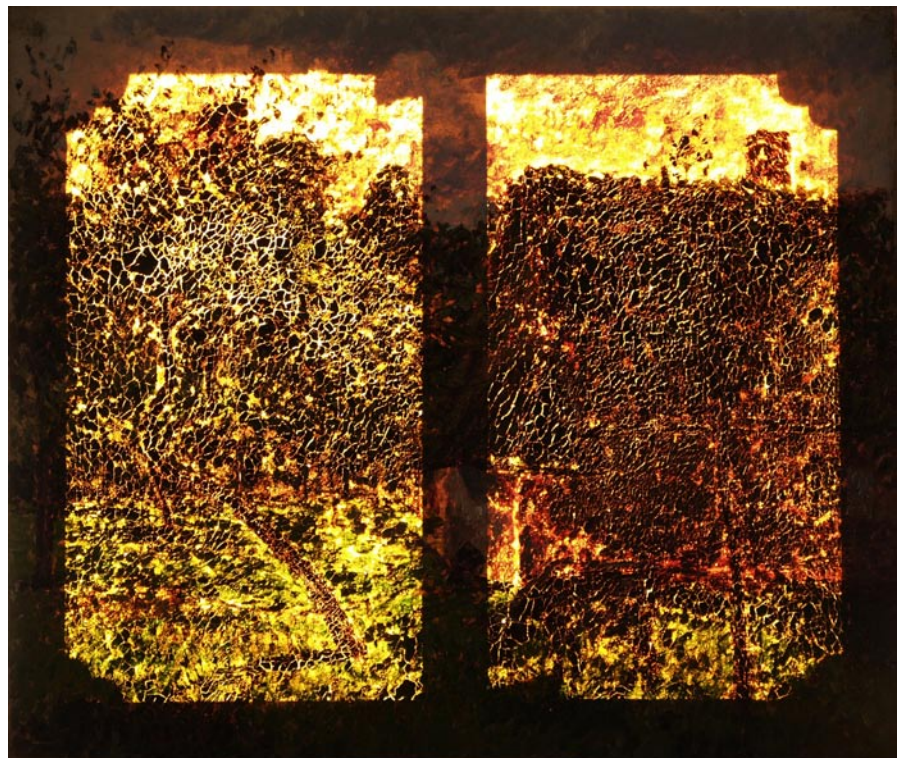


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Fig. 3  
Raking light



Fig. 4  
Transmitted light







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Fig. 5  
UV fluorescence



Fig. 6  
Signature and detail  
of the letter "P", whose  
dark-blue paint is  
partially blended with  
the paint-layer beneath,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)





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Fig. 7  
Details, canvas verso  
with firm trademark  
P. Contet and registration  
mark of the firm  
Bourgeois Ainé on  
the centre bar of the  
stretcher

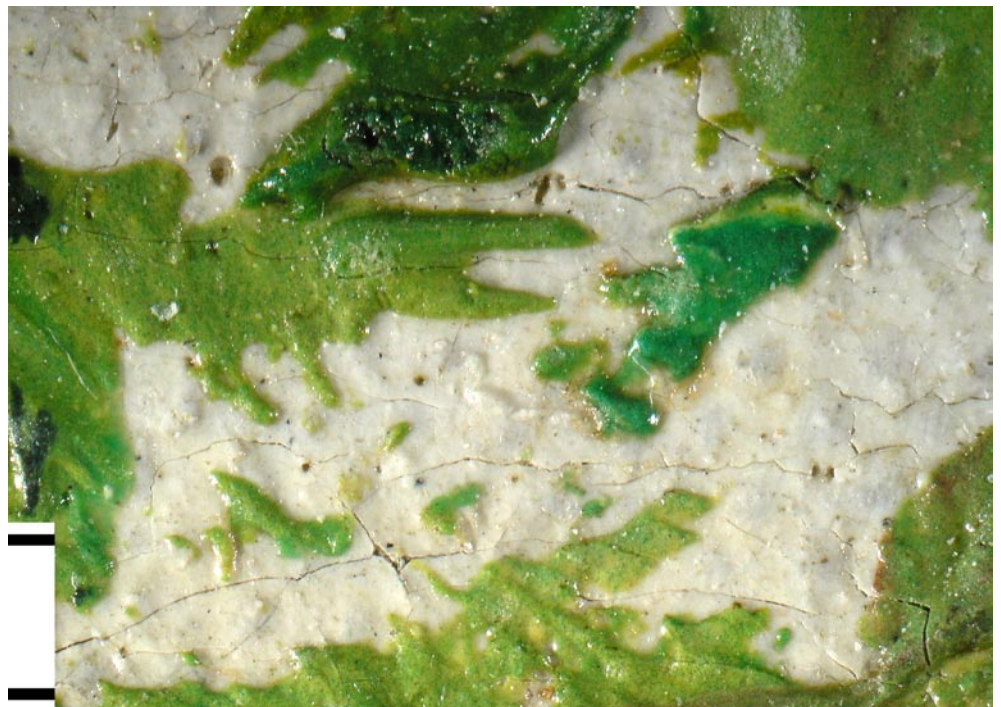
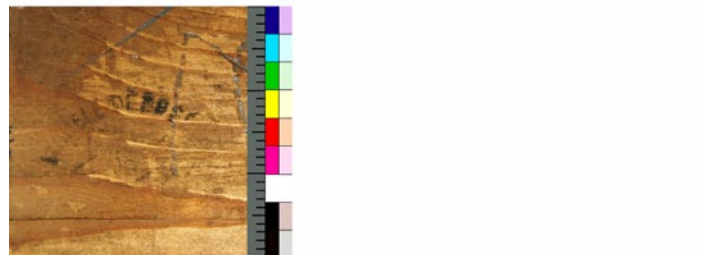


Fig. 8  
Pale grey ground  
between different green  
paint applications,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)





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Fig. 9

Thin paint applications, in some places spread out, which belonged to the compositional lay-in, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10

Detail, unpainted areas of ground in the region of the house, revealing clearly visible build-up of paint from thin to impasto, applied wet-in-wet







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Fig. 11  
Paints of different colour  
taken up by the brush  
blend when the brush  
is applied to the canvas,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12  
Changes in the green  
paint, microscopic photo-  
graph (M = 1 mm)

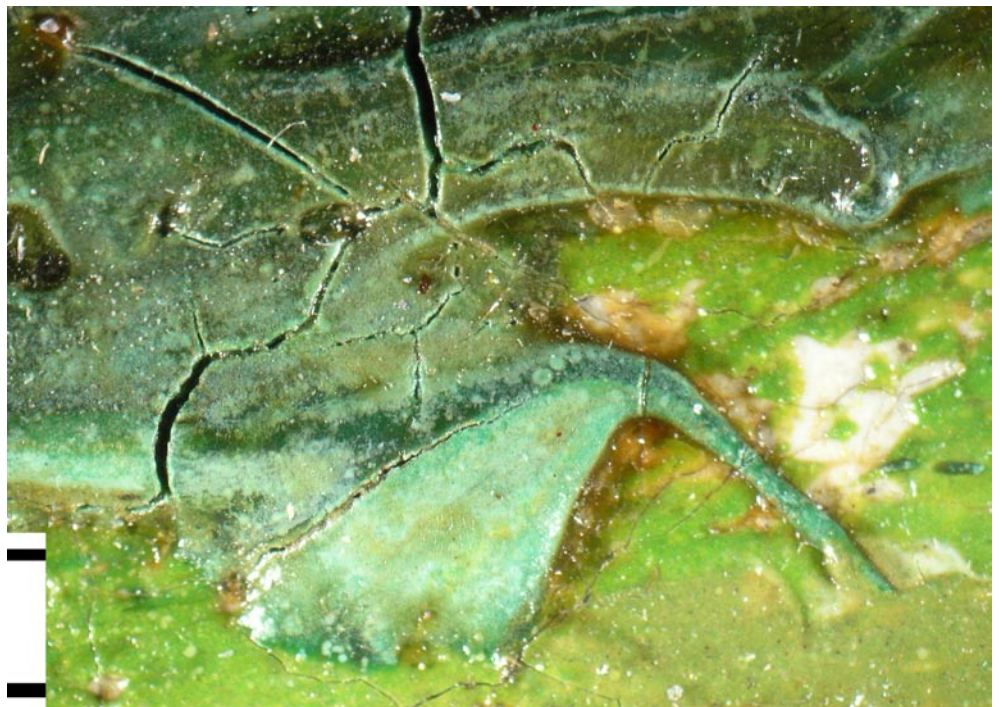






Fig. 13  
Details, raking light  
photographs of the  
canvas recto and verso  
show cleavage and  
deformations of the  
canvas, which have been  
caused by the raising of  
individual patches of the  
paint layer

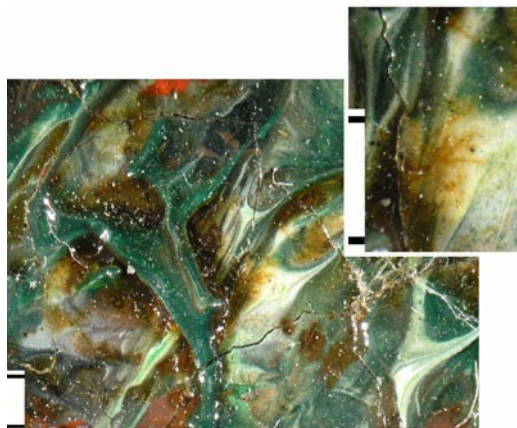


Fig. 14  
Details; under UV  
stimulation, the reddish-  
brown remains of an  
older, discoloured coat of  
varnish in the crevices of  
impasto paint applica-  
tions show the typical  
yellowish-green fluores-  
cence of an aged resin-  
ous coating, microscopic  
photograph (M = 1 mm)