



**Willi Finch**

(1854-1930)

**Village near the  
North Sea Coast**

(Village près des côtes  
de la Mer du Nord)

*c. 1899*

*signed bottom left: „A.W.F.“*

*no date*

*oil on canvas*

*h 57.5 cm x w 71.0 cm*

*WRM Dep. FC 711*





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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

## Brief Report

This rigorously pointillist painting has been preserved unrestored and virtually unchanged apart from one slight retouching, and it shows the characteristic dot-pattern of the well considered and carefully executed pictorial structure. The IR reflectogram brings out in particular the systematic arrangement of the individual colours (fig. 5). Finch made a careful underdrawing of his motif on the pale surface of the pre-primed canvas and then composed a first distribution of colour fields and the shaded areas with largish dabs of paint. In several sessions, each time allowing the previous coat to dry, he “condensed” the fields with increasingly smaller dots of paint. Slight depressions and scratches on lower-lying dabs and colour fields point to the picture having been handled between the individual phases of work (fig. 11).

The careful and well-planned working method is also clear from the continuation of the pencil underdrawing in the painting process (fig. 10). Relative to the underdrawing, Finch changed only small details: an arch motif in the area of the houses in the background, and the contour of the field in front show discrepancies. Even though many areas are laid in with more than two colours, there is a predominant use of complementary hues, e.g. blue and yellow or green and orange-red. No use whatever was made of black. The colours come across as pure and unmixed. The limpid character of the painting also results from the incorporation of the pale ground into the colour scheme (fig. 6).



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## Picture support canvas

Standard format	no standard format
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical 23, horizontal 25 threads per cm; very fine golden-yellow fabric, Z-twist
Stretching	stretcher not original, has been changed once; raking light reveals the mark left by an originally narrower centre-bar, and moreover, the current stretching on a considerably extended stretcher does not coincide exactly with the edge of the painted area of the picture; small nail holes on the turnover edge point to a different first stretching during the painting process; further evidence is provided by clear stretch-marks on the upper edge (fig. 8)
Stretcher	stretcher with centre-bar
Stretcher depth	1.4 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	careful working, grooves discernible at the corner joints; these fine markings point to a hand-made rather than serially produced stretcher
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	in the middle of the centre-bar, not identifiable; two lines of writing arranged in an oval; above: "FABRIQUE DE COULEURS" (lower line illegible); in the middle: "MO[...]"; the impression measures approx. 6.2 x 3.8 cm



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## Ground

Sizing	cannot be determined
Colour	pale beige; individual orange and red pigment particles testify to a slight tinting
Application	this is a pre-primed canvas (ground applied before cutting to size), which was used generously cut; on the stretcher verso there is plenty of surplus fabric at the top and bottom (fig. 2)
Binding medium	fine shrinkage cracks together with the porous and absorbent character indicate a glue-based ground
Texture	thin, single layer, no brushwork discernible; fabric structure clearly preserved, even and homogeneous

## Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	soft lead or graphite pencil
Extent/character	contour lines for larger areas, in addition indications of very fine detail in the houses in the background (fig. 5); in the advanced stages of the painting, too, Finch used the pencil for further sketching; here the line is on top of the lower paint layers (fig. 10)
Pentimenti	an arch shape in the area of the roovescape in the background was not realized at the painting stage; the outline of the foreground area on the left was executed with a different angle



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## Paint layer

Paint application/technique  
and artist's own revision

the dark shadows were laid-in first in larger dabs of paint, the areas were then packed with ever smaller dots of colour; the painting was executed in several sittings, between which Finch waited for the paint to dry

Painting tools

brushes, strokes predominantly 2-6 mm in width

Surface structure

very characteristic even structure which achieves an overall scaly effect through the juxtaposition of mostly oval impasto paint applications (fig. 3)

Palette

hues revealed by visual microscopic inspection: two greens, two blues, red lake, red, two yellows, white, no black  
VIS spectrometry: copper green pigment(?), viridian, rose madder, vermillion(?), chrome yellow(?), cadmium yellow(?), chrome orange, cobalt blue, ultramarine

Binding mediums

presumably oil

## Surface finish

Authenticity/condition

preserved in unvarnished state



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#### Signature/Mark

When?	after cessation of work and when paint was dry
Autograph signature	thinly dabbed in a strong blue in the pointillist manner; very fine brush; Finch used the same blue to execute small accents in the pale field (fig. 9)
Serial	–

#### Frame

Authenticity	gilt frame dating from 2001 (Petzenmacher, Munich); the pointillist inner frame was present at this point, but technical examination revealed that it was not original; its technique differs clearly from that of the painting, and there are traces of circular-saw marks; also a patinating glaze on the wood and shiny nails indicate a relatively modern manufacture and imitation
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#### State of preservation

Apart from one retouching, totally unrestored; weak turnover edges where stretched; marks of the stretcher are evident; white crystalline efflorescence on the dark-green paint used for the meadow in the foreground alters the colour impression (fig. 12); large blackened areas verso indicate earlier microbial exposure.

#### Additional remarks

There is a comparable painting: *Country Road near the North Sea Coast (Route de Campagne près de la Côte de la Mer du Nord)* dating from 1888/1889. [Lit.: exhib. cat. "A.W.Finch 1854–1930", Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1992].

#### Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhib. cat. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud Cologne, 8. September - 9. December 2001), Cologne 2001, cat. no. 42, p. 112f., 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                     |  |

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Date: 03/2007
Date: 08/2007





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Fig. 1  
Recto



Fig. 2  
Verso





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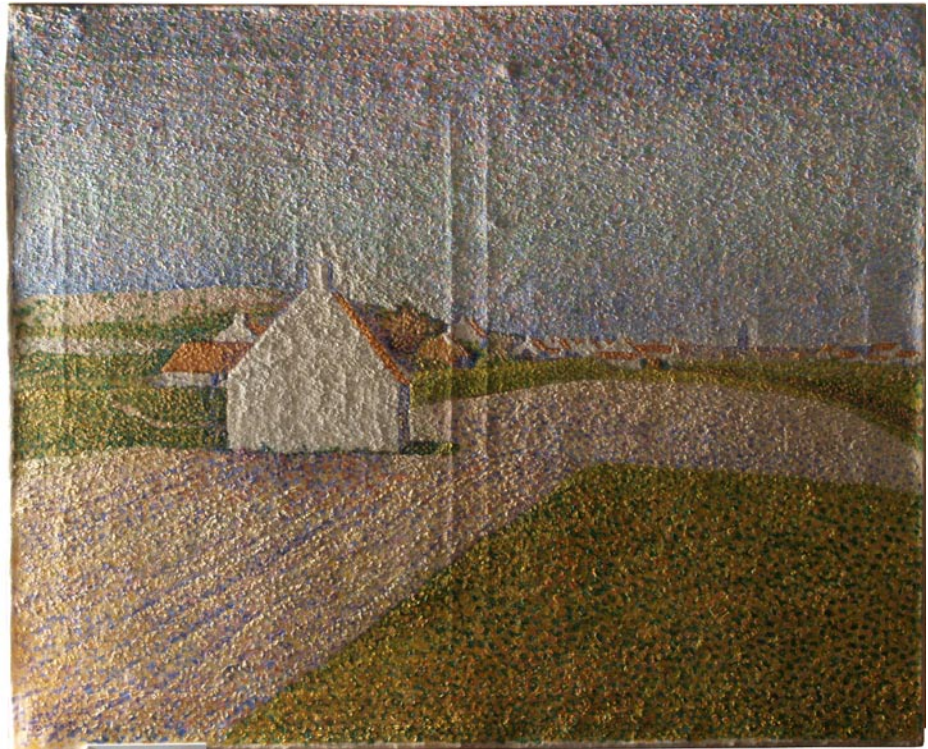


Fig. 3  
Raking light from left

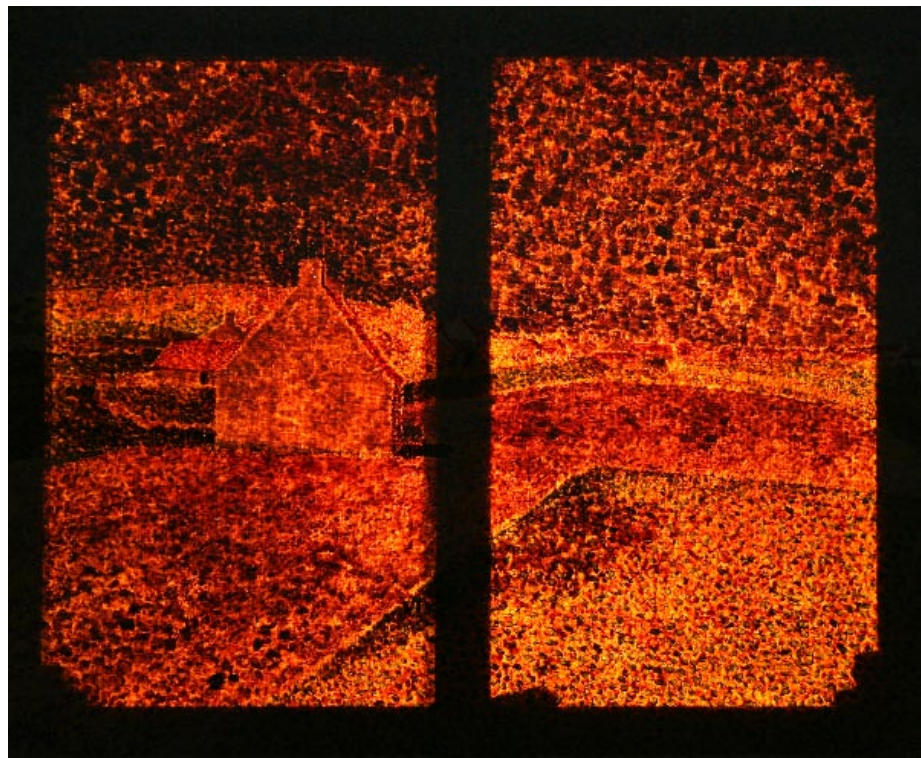


Fig. 4  
Transmitted-light  
photograph, illustrating  
the size, density and  
distribution of the  
countless dots of paint





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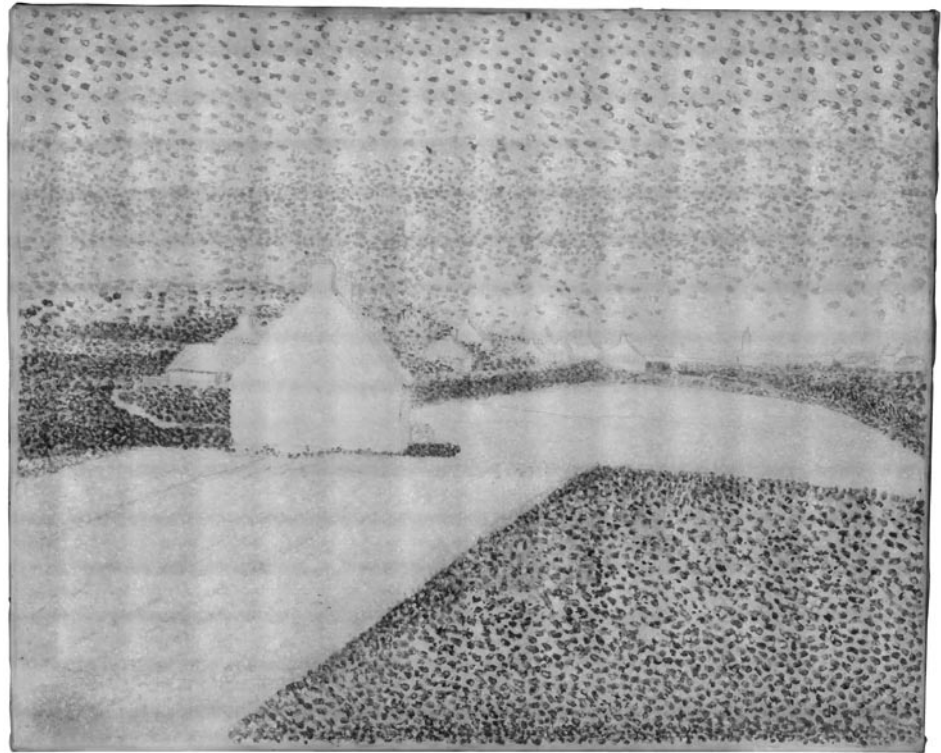


Fig. 5  
IR reflectogram



Fig. 6  
Detail, bottom left-hand  
corner with initials





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Fig. 7  
Detail, UV-fluorescence  
photograph, glowing  
fluorescence of dabs of  
rose madder

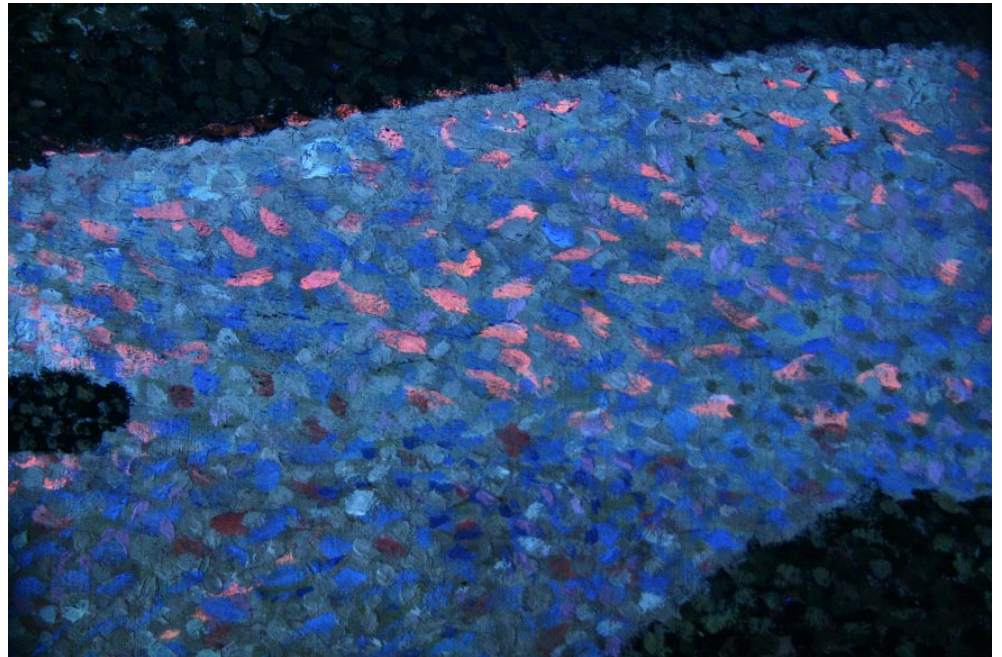
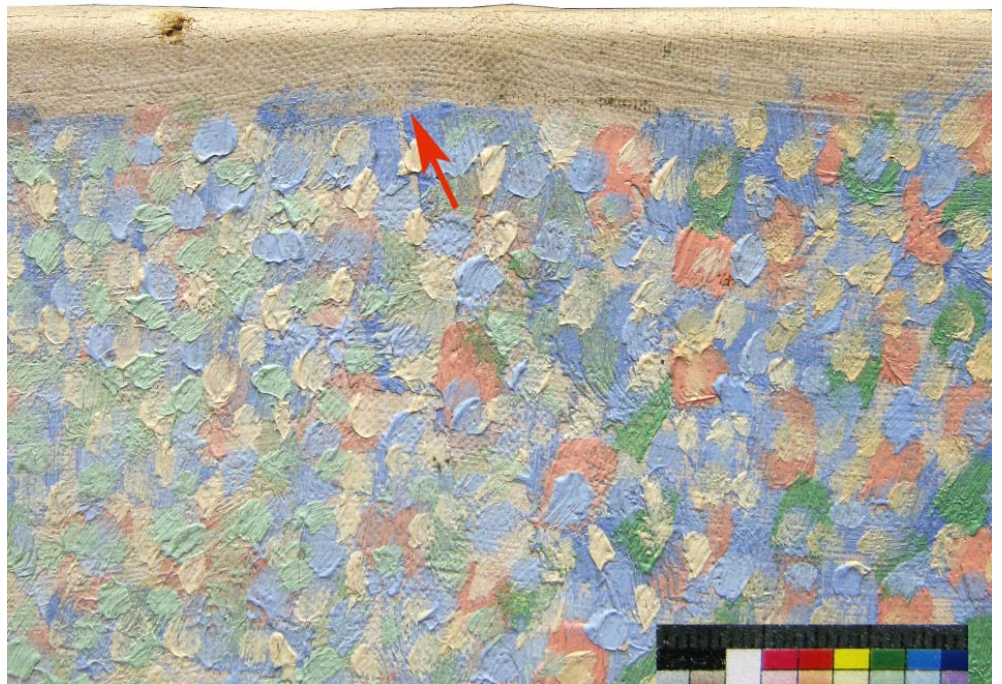


Fig. 8  
Detail, stretch-marks  
(arrow) on the top edge  
of the canvas, with edge  
of painted area







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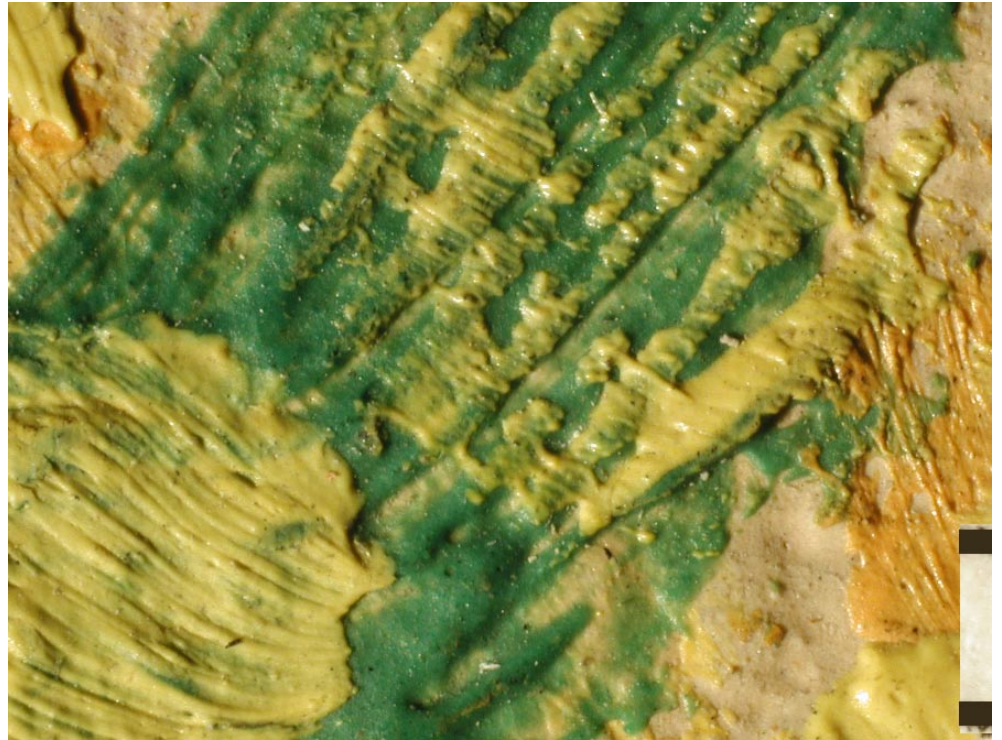


Fig. 9  
Illustrating painting  
technique, wet-over-dry  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10  
Line of underdrawing  
on the paint-layer,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)





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Fig. 11

Traces of scratches on underlying paint layers indicate intermediate storage or mechanical stress during the drying process, microscopic photograph, (M = 1 mm) (arrows)

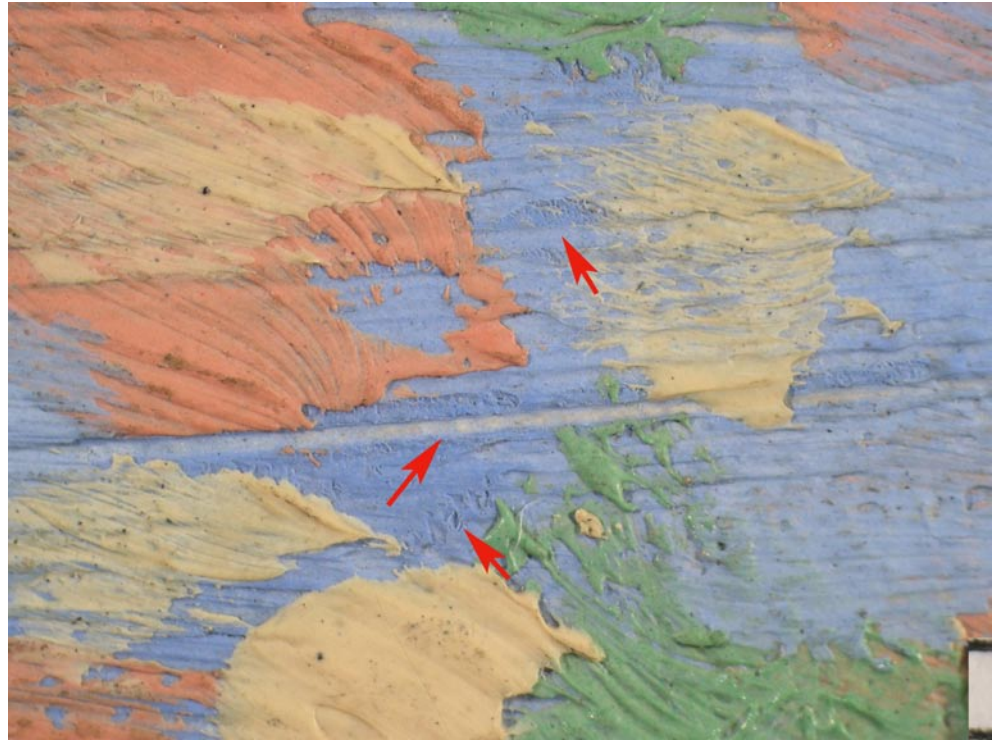


Fig. 12

Crystalline efflorescence on green dabs of paint; microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

