



Gustave Caillebotte

(1848-1894)

Gennevilliers Plain, Yellow Fields

(La plaine de Gennevilliers,
champs jaunes)

1884

*signed and dated bottom right:
"G Caillebotte / 1884"*

Oil on canvas

h 54.5 cm x w 65.4 cm

WRM Dep. 561





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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Brief Report

Caillebotte had a particular predilection for pictures in the standard Figure 15 (54.0 x 65.0 cm) format, and this painting *Gennevilliers Plain, Yellow Fields*, is one such. He chose this format for more than a hundred pictures out of a total output comprising more than 500 works [Lewerentz 2008, pp. 274-275]. The canvas, pre-primed in off-white, came from the art-supply dealer Dubus, whom Caillebotte frequently patronized [cf. Caillebotte WRM Dep. 828, WRM Dep. FC 727, WRM Dep. FC 689, WRM Dep. 622]. In spite of the canvas's being lined, it was possible here to use UV fluorescence to reveal the dealer's stencilled inscription on the canvas *verso* (fig. 6). As has been possible to establish far more clearly in Caillebotte's other pictures, this one too shows evidence of a two-stage underdrawing in charcoal and in brush-and-paint. [cf. Caillebotte WRM Dep. 828, WRM Dep. FC 706, WRM Dep. 447, WRM Dep. 622] (fig. 12).

The actual painting was then executed with lively brushwork predominantly in short strokes and dabs, wet-in-wet, but also wet-on-dry. The surface of the picture was gradually covered in repeated applications of paint spread over two to three sessions, during which process the foreground became increasingly impasto (figs. 3, 4). The autograph signature and date in dark-green paint seem to have been applied at the same time as the final colour highlights and in an identical colour (fig. 7). An important pointer to the picture's having been painted in the open air is to be found on its bottom edge, where a (now unfortunately retouched) unpainted patch points to the painting's having been fastened to a field-easel of the sort then usual for *plein air* painting [vgl. Caillebotte WRM Dep. 622, WRM Dep. FC 828, WRM Dep. FC 727, WRM Dep. FC 689] (fig. 10).



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Picture support canvas

Standard format	F 15 (65.0 x 54.0 cm) horizontal
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical 22, horizontal 19 threads per cm; fine, dense and even weave with yarns of varying thickness; slight Z-twist
Stretching	not authentic, changed in the course of lining and enclosed all round in adhesive paper; the original tacking at intervals of app. 4.0-6.5 cm; slight stretchmarks along the upper edge of the painting
Stretcher/strainer	original stretcher with vertical centre-bar, chamfered <i>verso</i>
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.0 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	the fact that the bottom bar of the stretcher is not the same breadth and depth (6.0 and 1.6 cm respectively) as the remaining three bars (b 5.5, d 1.6 cm) is unusual
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	stencilling <i>verso</i> on the original canvas can only be seen through the relatively loosely woven lining canvas with the help of UV fluorescence, and then only sketchily: "DUBUS" (h. 2.0 x b 11.5 cm) (fig. 6)



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Ground

Sizing	undetermined
Colour	off-white
Application	very thin, smooth, and even application; the textile structure remains visible although the elevations are covered; the priming is presumably commercial, but the turnover edge is hidden by the all-round adhesive tape
Binding medium	presumably oil
Texture	the ground is homogeneous and even; microscopically small admixtures of a yellow to red-ochre pigment are discernible (fig. 11)

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	along the few places left unpainted, very few microscopic blue-grey lines can be seen; these could derive from a first lay-in of the composition in brush-and-paint; in places there are remains of charcoal along these lines, possibly suggesting a two-stage underdrawing/underpainting (fig. 12)
Extent/character	in view of the paucity of traces, no statement possible
Pentimenti	–



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Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

brisk, loose manner of painting; the brushwork is largely oriented to the form of the respective motif: paint pushed across broad areas in sky, flower-fields in short dashes and dabs, right-hand grass field in vertical strokes, horizon in horizontal lines; in places the white ground has been left visible (fig. 8); the paint was applied both wet-in-wet and wet-on-dry in presumably two to three sessions (fig. 9); the chronological sequence was from top (sky) to bottom (fields), the surface being gradually closed up by repeated applications of paint

Painting tools

brushes, presumably bristle, varying in width from 0.3-1.2 cm

Surface structure

brushwork is clearly visible: highly impasto and structured in the area of the flower-fields, thin and smooth in the region of the sky (fig. 3)

Palette

visual microscopic inspection reveals: pale yellow, medium yellow, orange, red lake (pink fluorescence under UV stimulation, fig. 6), medium blue, violet, pale green, medium green, dark green; white and black only in blends;
VIS spectrometry: chrome yellow/cadmium yellow(?), vermilion, cochineal, cobalt blue, copper-based green, viridian

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition

the present varnish is not authentic; around impasto areas there are slight remains of an older, yellowed varnish



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Signature/Mark

When?	autograph signature “G Caillebotte / 1884” in oil-paint was applied with a brush presumably not long after the picture was painted, as the dark-green coarse-grained paint was also used in the final paint applications of the picture (fig. 7)
Autograph signature	in agreement with autograph signatures of Caillebotte’s at this time: the signature inclines slightly to the right and the letters are close together
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

The painting has been lined, presumably using paste; the canvas has two small tears app. 1.2 and 1.0 cm in length respectively in the middle of the picture; isolated microscopic losses in the paint-layer; some slight retouching in the region of the sky (fig. 5) and in part in an area at the bottom edge originally left unpainted, which is presumably due to the picture’s having been fastened to a field-easel (fig. 10).

Additional remarks

The picture bears evidence of having been painted outdoors (see above). Verso there are some already very old stickers and inscriptions which have not yet been scientifically examined and might possibly give more information about the work’s early provenance.



Literature

- Berhaut 1994: Marie Berhaut, *Catalogue raisonné des peintures et pastels*, Paris 1994, cat. no. 293, p. 183, with ill.
- Bourgeois Aîné 1888: Bourgeois Aîné, *Catalogue général illustré*, Paris
- Budde 1990: Rainer Budde, "Die Ebene von Gennevilliers von Gustave Caillebotte – Eine Leihgabe aus Privatbesitz im Wallraf-Richartz-Museum", in: *Kölner Museumsbulletin*, 3/1990, .4-8
- 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. 15, p. 50, with ill.
- Caillebotte 2008: Über das Wasser – Gustave Caillebotte, Ein Impressionist wieder entdeckt, exhib. cat. Bremen, Kunsthalle, 29 June - 5 October 2008, Copenhagen, Ordrupgaard, 17 October 2008 - 22 February 2009, Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 16 March - 14 June 2009, cat. no. 36, p. 88, with ill.
- Czymmek 2000: Götz Czymmek, "Caillebotte im Wallraf-Richartz-Museum", *Kölner Museums Bulletin*, 3/2000, 51-61
- Lewerentz 2008: Katja Lewerentz, "Gustave Caillebottes Maltechnik und die Praxis der Freilichtmalerei", in: *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, 2 (2008), 274-286
- Varnedoe 1987: Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte*, New Haven, London 1987, cat. no. 66, p. 171, with ill.

Source of illustrations

Fig. 10 uses detail from Bourgeois Aîné 1888, p. 109

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



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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: Caroline von Saint-George

Date: 10/2008

Author of brief report: Katja Lewerentz

Date: 11/2002



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Fig. 1
Recto

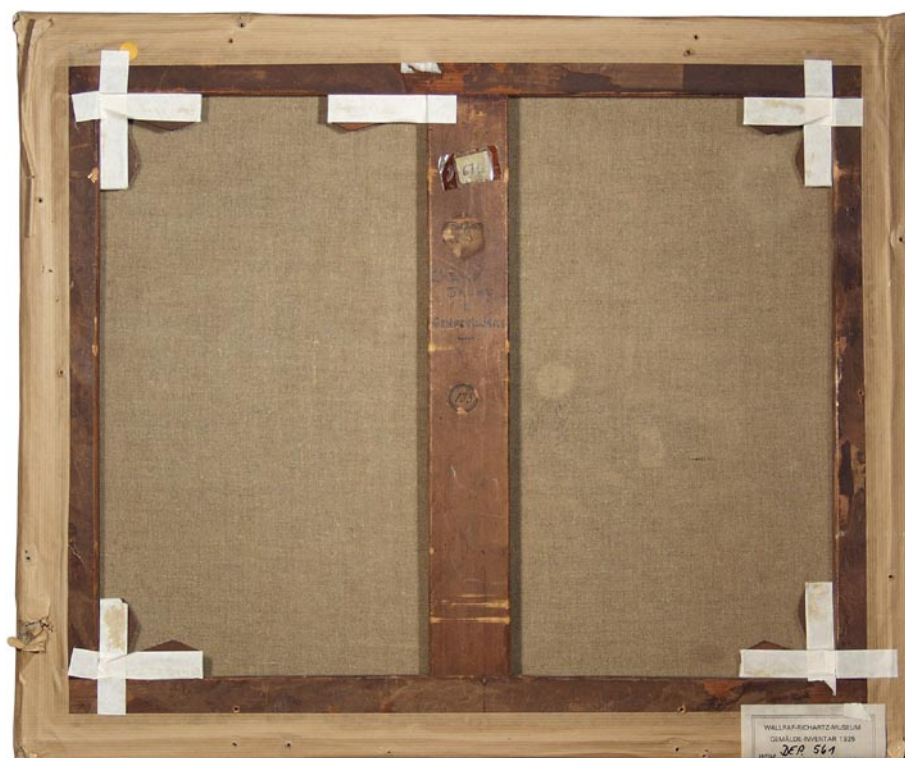


Fig. 2
Verso, lined



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Fig. 3
Raking light



Fig. 4
Transmitted light





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Fig. 5
UV fluorescence

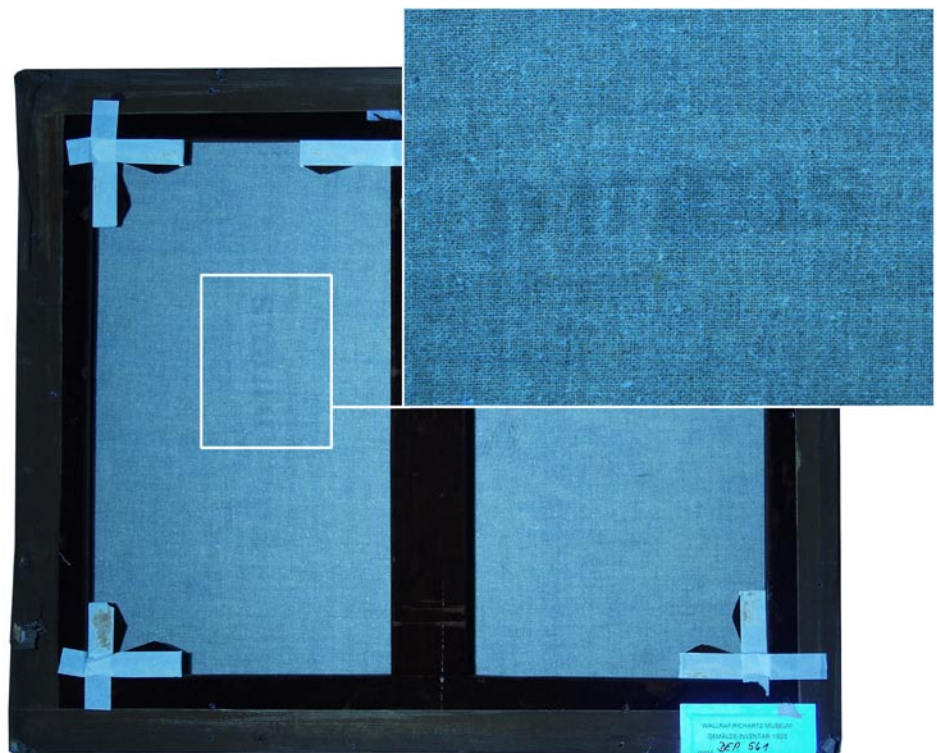


Fig. 6
UV fluorescence of
verso with detail of the
sketchily discernible
dealer's stencil "DUBUS"



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Fig. 7
Detail, signature

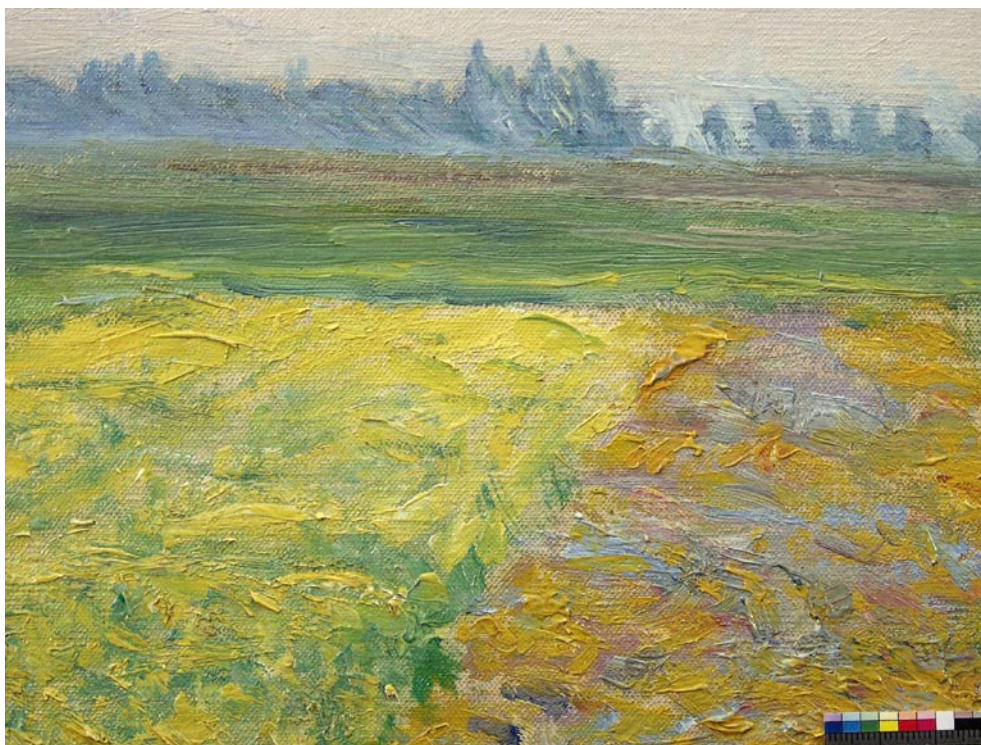


Fig. 8
Detail, brisk painting
method with places
where the white ground
has been left free



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Fig. 9
Detail, flower field, with wet-in-wet and wet-on-dry paint applications

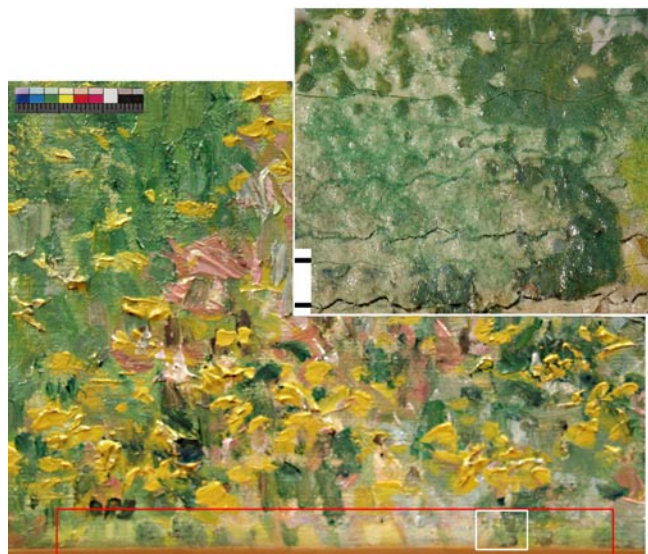
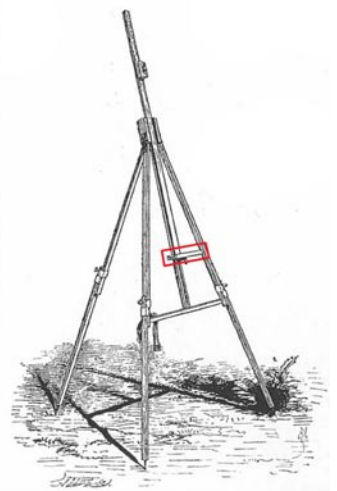


Fig. 10
Detail of the bottom edge of the picture, retouched unpainted patch in incident light and beneath the microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm), which presumably derives from the picture's having been fastened to a field-easel





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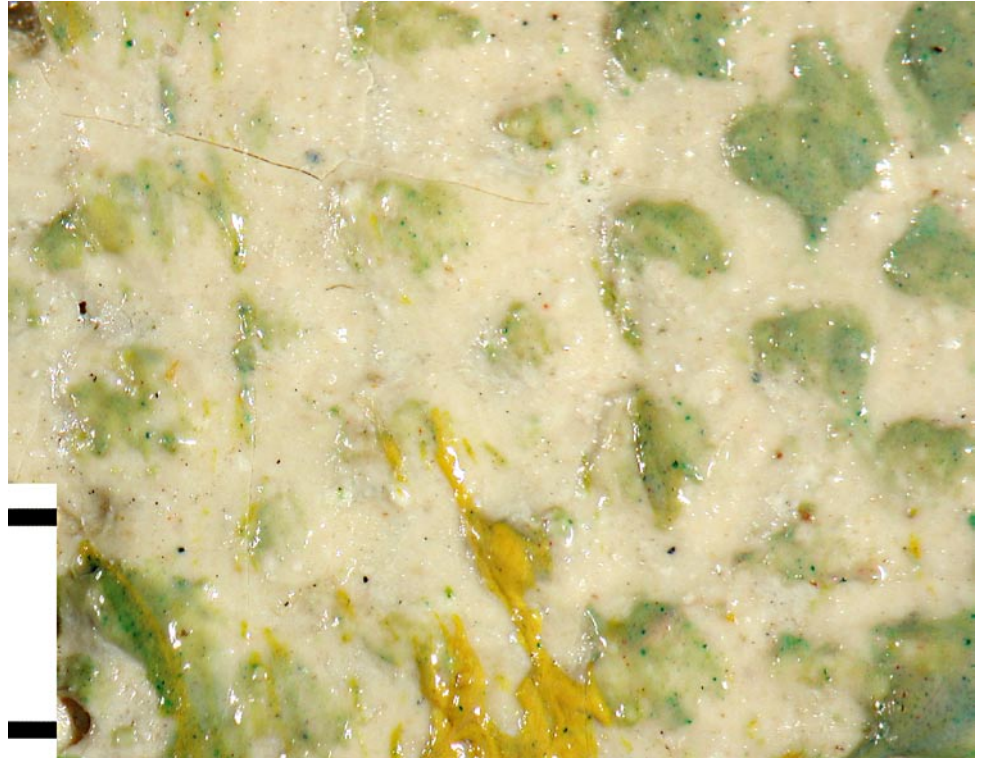


Fig. 11
Off-white ground with
slight admixture of
yellow to red-ochre
pigment, microscopic
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12
Blue-grey brush under-
drawing and remains
of what appears to be a
previous charcoal sketch,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)