



Paul Cézanne

(1839-1906)

**Landscape to the West
of Aix-en-Provence**

(Dans la plaine de Bellevue)

1885/88

unsigned and undated

Oil on canvas

h 65.3 cm x b 81.5 cm

WRM 3188





Brief Report

In 1913, six years after Cézanne's death, this landscape, together with seven other works by Cézanne, was exhibited at the Secessionshaus in Berlin. The gallery-owner and publisher Paul Cassirer had acquired this work from Cézanne's art-dealer Ambroise Vollard [Rewald 1996, Vollard photo archive no. 302] (fig. 5). As we can see in part from inscriptions and stickers verso, previous owners such as the writers Erich Maria Remarque and Margarete Oppenheim, as well as the Cézanne expert Walter Feilchenfeldt feature in the illustrious provenance of the painting (fig. 2). The motif of the plain of Bellevue attracted the artist time and again, as his sister had a property there. Two further pictures were painted in the following years [Rewald 1996, incl. nos. 716, 717] and only recently has a relationship been demonstrated between this and a watercolour in a private collection [Schaefer/Saint-George/Lewerentz 2008, pp. 150f.] (fig. 12). As in the other Provençal landscape in the collection of the Fondation Corboud at the Wallraf museum, which dates from a few years earlier (Dep. FC 657), here too the artist used a study-grade canvas, known in the trade as *toile étude* or *toile pochade* (fig. 6).

The loosely woven, fragile picture-support led to early lining. Cézanne chose the standard F25 size, according to Rewald one of the most frequent canvas sizes in his œuvre [Rewald 1996, vol. 1, p. 16]. The artist captured all the details of the later painterly execution in a compositional lay-in (fig. 7) which took the form of a drawing both in charcoal and in blue paint applied using a fine brush. These preliminaries were then largely covered over by countless strokes over almost the whole of the surface, applied with fine tongue-shaped hair brushes (figs. 10, 11); this very careful, well-considered and almost pernickety brushwork occupied a number of working sessions. The analytically dissected pictorial elements that characterize this work are thus intermeshed in dense applications of paint (fig. 9).



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Picture support canvas

Standard format	F 25 horizontal (81.0 x 65.0 cm)
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	study grade, open, almost netlike weave with threads of uneven thickness and errors in weave; app. 13-14 threads per cm horizontal and vertical (fig. 6)
Stretching	not authentic; canvas stretched so that the horizontal threads are drawn towards the corners; foldover edges on the righthand side cut back to edge of picture; current stretching dates back to an early (pre-1913?) lining, presumably in France; stretchmarks point to an original interval between nails of 4-7 cm
Stretcher/strainer	stretcher with cross bars, authenticity undetermined; traces of use, inscriptions and stickers point to a considerable age
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.4 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	–
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	"Made in France" stamped on the right-hand bar of the stretcher; no further details determined (stretcher bears a number of stickers all round)



Ground

Sizing	not determined
Colour	off-white, microscopic inspection reveals individual fine ochre(?) particles (fig. 5)
Application	prior to cutting-to-size and stretching
Binding medium	presumably semi-oil
Texture	very even, homogeneous and thin layer; square crack formation, due to open weave (fig. 8)

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	two-stage compositional lay-in 1. charcoal for first indication of motif (fig. 7), deep-black irregular charcoal particles got mixed in with the paint while it was wet 2. outlines applied in thin dark-blue paint with a fine-pointed brush, for example the horizon (Abb. 8)
Extent/character	stereomicroscopic examination along borderlines and in unpainted areas shows how all the important elements of the lay-in were already comprehensively established in a charcoal sketch (cf. mapping, fig. 7); no IR reflectography because there are few traces of any paint at this stage, and the thick paint-layer largely covered this first lay-in along with the thin blue outlines
Pentimenti	none apparent



Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

the underdrawing executed with a brush in blue paint was followed by a large number of paint applications, which as far as can be seen were partly executed wet-in-wet, but also wet-on-dry (fig. 10); the paint-layers are increasingly closed as one moves from the foreground to the middle ground and the sky (fig. 4); evidently Cézanne applied the several layers of paint in such a way that they grew evenly across the whole area of the picture; the short, parallel brush-strokes are increasingly strongly directional: predominantly vertical but also diagonal and occasionally horizontal; they are extremely accurately placed; the paint varies in quantity and consistency from markedly dilute, covering only the high points of the canvas weave, to creamy; in places repetitions or colour corrections within individual elements (fig. 10)

Painting tools

predominantly tongue-shaped hair brushes of various widths; numerous brush hairs embedded in the paint layers

Surface structure

where the paint applications are less impasto, the canvas structure dominates (fig. 6); only along the edges of the individual motifs, e.g. groups of trees, are there thin, precise beads of paint following the brushwork (fig. 10)

Palette

visual microscopic inspection reveals: white, two yellows, medium red, dark blue, dark bluish-green, medium green
VIS spectrometry: iron-oxide yellow(?), vermilion, ultramarine, cobalt blue(?), viridian(?), zinc green(?), chrome green(?)

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition

varnished, not authentic (removal of old varnish and renewed application during a restoration measure following purchase of painting in 1965)



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Signature/Mark

When? no signature present

Autograph signature –

Serial –

Frame

Authenticity undetermined, but clearly very old

State of preservation

Evidently early, very stiff and brittle lining applied with paste(?) (pre-1913?) (none of the labels appears to have been moved) with pressure marks on the paint-layer that impair the original surface-structure; lining canvas vertical 24, horizontal 18 threads per cm; threads 0.3-0.5 mm thick, Z-twist; two more extensive matt retouchings in the sky region, due to damage to the picture support; in two places there are individual brown patches below the paint-layers.

Additional remarks

The lining may be due to Vollard (cf. Brief Report WRM Dep. FC 658).



Literature

- Wallraf-Richartz-Museum Cologne, Von Stefan Lochner bis Paul Cézanne, 120 Meisterwerke der Gemäldesammlung, Cologne 1986, p. 254 with ill.
- Rewald 1996: John Rewald, The Paintings of Paul Cézanne, A Catalogue Raisonné, New York 1996, 2 vols, entry no. 715, under "Dans la Plaine de Bellevue", 1885-88, vol. 1, p. 448, with ill.
- Venturi 1936: Lionello Venturi, Cézanne, son art - son oeuvre, Paris 1936, no. 448, vol. 1, vol. 2, plate 131
- Reissner 2008: Elisabeth Reissner, Ways of Making, Practice and Innovation in Cézanne's Paintings in the National Gallery, in: National Gallery Technical Bulletin, vol. 29 (2008), pp. 4-30
- Rewald 1983: John Rewald, Paul Cezanne, The Watercolours. A catalogue raisonné, London 1983, p. 148, entry no. 260
- Schaefer/Saint-George/Lewerentz 2008: Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George, Katja Lewerentz, Painting Light, The hidden techniques of the Impressionists, exhib. cat., Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne 29 February 2008-22 June 2008, p. 150

Source of illustrations

Fig. 12: Belgian Art Research Institute, Brussels

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: 04/2007

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Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso



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Fig. 3
UV fluorescence



Fig. 4
Transmitted light



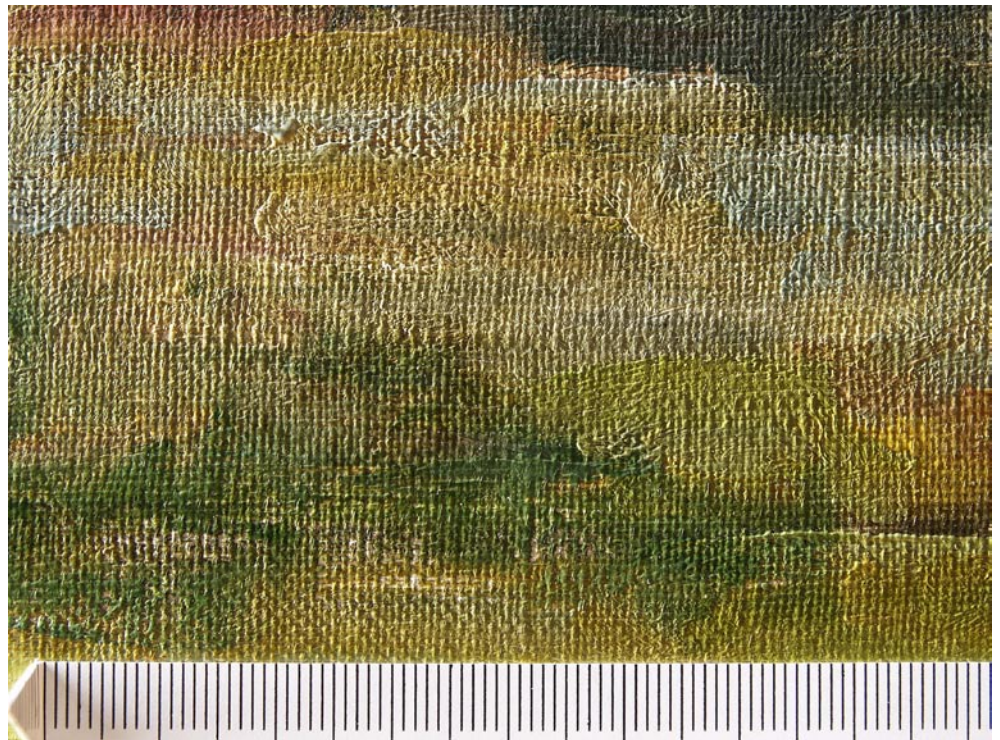


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Fig. 5
Detail, label of the
packing company
J. Chenue, which
identifies the painting
as being in the
possession of the
art-dealer Cassirer



Fig. 6
Detail under raking light,
showing plain quality of
canvas





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Fig. 7
Mapping of the findings regarding charcoal underdrawing (marked in red) with detail, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

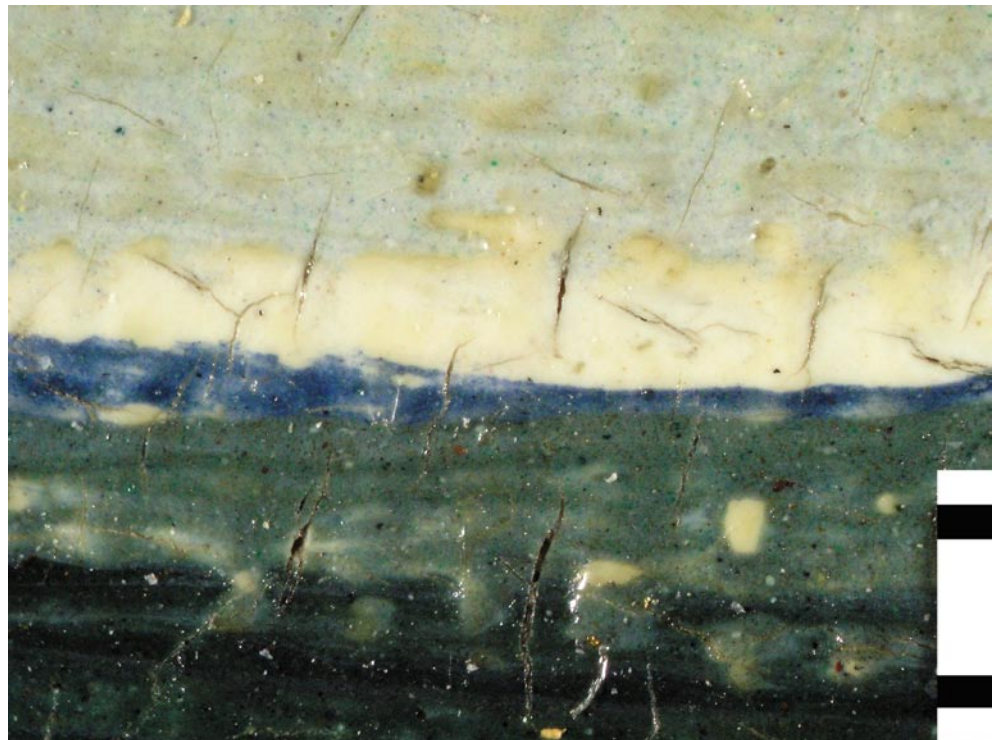


Fig. 8
Second phase of work: blue underdrawing with paintbrush, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



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Fig. 9
Detail, heavily
concentrated
applications of
paint in echelon



Fig. 10
Detail, correction
by a number of
superimposed paint
applications





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Fig. 11
Meticulous technique:
greenish-yellow, wet-
in-wet brush-stroke
accentuates existing red
highlight, microscopic
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12
Paul Cézanne,
The Plain of Bellevue,
1885/88, drawing and
watercolour on paper,
h 30.4 x b 47.3 cm,
private collection