



**Paul Gauguin**

(1848-1903)

**Landscape near Rouen**

(Paysage à Rouen)

1884

*signed and dated bottom left:  
"p Gauguin 84"*

*Oil on canvas*

*h 74.0 cm x b 60.0 cm*

*WRM Dep. FC 699*





## Brief Report

The *Landscape near Rouen* is a second 1884 painting by Paul Gauguin in the collection of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud [Wildenstein 1964, cat. no. 124, Wildenstein 2001, cat. no. 117]. As with *Manuring the Fields* [cf WRM Dep. FC 663] this canvas also corresponds to the standard Figure 20 (73.0 x 60.0 cm) size and attests to the fact that this standard size was among Gauguin's favourite formats, at least during the period of his sojourn in Rouen from the beginning of 1884 until the late autumn of that year. Of the not quite fifty pictures he painted there, twelve are this size. According to the stamp verso, the stretched canvas was acquired from the paint dealer Latouche (Abb. 4). Gauguin maintained close relations with this traditional purveyor of artists' supplies over many years. This is evidenced not only by the picture *The Seine at the Pont de Grenelle*, which dates from nine years earlier and is also in the collection of the Wallraf [cf. WRM Dep. FC 744], but also by published findings and studies of sources [Jirat-Wasiutynski/Newton 2000, p. 205]. A very fine canvas pre-primed in off-white was also chosen by Gauguin for this picture. Examination under raking light, transmitted light and X-ray points to the fact that the artist had evidently already used this canvas, at least in part, for another picture, and reused it for the painting visible today (figs 3, 4, 6, 10, 13). The rejected composition cannot be identified any more closely, but as far as can be determined by the evaluation of imaging techniques, including stereo-microscopic inspection, its motif and coloration are totally different from those of the visible picture.

A shape in the bottom right-hand corner, reminiscent of a haystack, suggests that the first picture on the canvas was inverted with respect to the one we see (fig. 6). Traces of a preliminary sketch, presumably in charcoal, can be discerned under the microscope, although it cannot be determined with certainty whether this belongs to the first or second painting (fig. 9). A finding of this kind very largely accords with observations made on the three other Gauguins in the Wallraf collection dating from a period extending across 13 years. Gauguin used viscous paint both for the first picture and for the visible one. As a result of repeated applications of paint with a low binder content with drying times of undetermined duration, the surface texture is highly structured and the brushwork almost palpable. The multiple overlaying of individual paint applications with underlying brushstrokes in another colour to create structure has been described occasionally in English as 'corrugated textures' [Kirsh/Levinson 2000, p. 138f.]. Microscopic inspection reveals, in the foreground in a few places along the road, round, transparent and often yellowish particles embedded in the paint-layer, which may have something to do with processes of chemical change (fig. 14). Similarities with published findings suggest that this phenomenon is due to the influence of lead soaps [see Noble/Boon/Wadum 2002].



## Picture support canvas

Standard format	F20 (73.0 x 60.0 cm), vertical (fig. 2)
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical app. 30, horizontal app. 28 threads per cm; very fine, dense weave with a yarn thickness of 0.2-0.6 mm (vertical/horizontal) and a few irregularities such as knots and variations in yarn thickness; Z twist (fig. 7)
Stretching	authentic; tacked at intervals of app. 5.0-7.0 cm; weak stretchmarks on all four edges
Stretcher/strainer	stretcher with horizontal centre bar
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.0 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	chamfered recto and verso along the inner and outer edges by about 5 mm, scratches to mark the places of the grooves for the wedges
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	<p>Latouche stamp in black paint not quite in the centre of the canvas verso above the centre bar:</p> <p>“TOILES &amp; TABLEAUX et COULEURS / ENCADREMENTS / LATOUCHE / PARIS / 34, Rue de Lafayette [,] 34”</p> <p>inscribed in a double oval, inverted with respect to the present painting (fig. 4), furthermore above the stamp there are two more stamps, at right angles to this one, consisting of nothing more than the oval cartouche (fig. 2, arrow)</p>



Paul Gauguin – Landscape near Rouen  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

## Ground

Sizing	undetermined
Colour	off-white
Application	applied in presumably one or two layers before cutting-to-size and stretching
Binding medium	presumably oil
Texture	thin, even layer

## Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	charcoal(?) (fig. 9)
Extent/character	on the right-hand side of the picture there are, in the tree and along the diagonally ascending line of the wall/shed(?) dots of pigment which suggest a sketch-like underdrawing; these few particles of charcoal(?) are only discernible under the microscope, and only in those few places where the canvas was left unpainted to expose the ground; whether these traces of a drawing medium relate to the first, rejected, painting, or the second, currently visible, one, cannot be said with any certainty
Pentimenti	cannot be determined



## Paint layer

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

1. first painting (unknown motif, fig. 4): statements are only possible by dint of the interpretation of the X-ray, raking-light and transmitted-light examination, and microscopic inspection where the current painting does not completely cover the canvas (no invasive techniques were employed); a semicircular shape visible in the X-ray in the bottom right-hand corner is reminiscent of a haystack; this picture is probably inverted with respect to the one now visible; but as with the latter, the limit of painting coincides with the edge of the picture, i.e. the rejected painting is not the result of cropping a larger canvas; coloration is clearly and in many ways different from that of the visible painting; the brushwork is still mostly discernible in spite of the overlying paint-layers (fig. 10);

2. second painting (Landscape near Rouen, fig. 1): paint-layers of the first painting evidently dry before this one was started; paint applications in the second painting were executed wet-in-wet, but wet-on-dry applications can also be attested and suggest drying phases during the execution of the work (figs 11, 12); consistency of the paint is viscous

### Painting tools

various brushes of breadths of predominantly 0.3-1.0 cm  
(applies to visible painting)

### Surface structure

brushwork both of the visible painting and the first one is discernible, as in each case the artist made several applications of viscous paint whose binder content was low; this produced a characteristic surface relief, the upper layers only raking the elevated areas of those beneath them (figs 3, 10)

### Palette

visual microscopic inspection reveals: white, pale yellow, orange, pale red, dark red lake, medium green, dark green, two different blues, black  
VIS spectrometry: cadmium(?) or chrome(?) yellow(?), iron-oxide orange, iron-oxide red, cochineal, rose madder(?), copper-based green, viridian, ultramarine blue, cobalt blue

### Binding mediums

presumably purely oil



### Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition	varnished, not authentic
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### Signature/Mark

When?	signature and date bottom right in dark blue paint applied with a pointed brush to the paint layer below after the latter had dried (fig. 8)
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Autograph signature	accords with known autograph signatures of Gauguin dating from the same period
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Serial	–
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### Frame

Authenticity	not authentic
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### State of preservation

Microscopic inspection reveals, in the foreground in a few places along the track, round, transparent and often yellowish particles embedded in the paint-layer, which may have something to do with processes of chemical change in the paint-layers and ground (fig. 14); similarities with published findings suggest that this phenomenon is due to the influence of lead soaps; the name “protusions” has been applied to changes of this kind; an analysis was not performed on account of the small quantity of material involved [see Noble/ Boon/ Wadum 2002]; verso countless small mould stains over the whole area of the canvas (fig. 2); open network of aging cracks in the paint and ground layers; a few peripheral areas have been retouched.

### Additional remarks

Some historical inscriptions and labels verso have been rendered illegible; it is not known when or why.



## 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. 44, p. 118., with ill.
- Christensen 1993: Carol Christensen, *The Painting Materials and Techniques of Paul Gauguin*, in: *Conservation Research, Monograph Series II, Studies in the History of Art*, 41, 1993, 63-103
- Jirat-Wasiutynski/Newton 2000: Wojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski, H. Travers Newton, *Technique and Meaning in the paintings of Paul Gauguin*, Cambridge/New York 2000
- Kirsh/Levenson 2000: Andrea Kirsh, Rustin S. Levenson, *Seeing through paintings: physical examination in art historical studies*, New Haven 2000, pp. 138f.
- Noble/ Boon/ Wadum 2002: Petria Noble, Jaap J. Boon, Jørgen Wadum, *Dissolution, aggregation and protrusions: lead soap formation in 17th century grounds and paint layers*, in: *Art Matters, Netherlands technical studies in art*, vol. 1, 2002, 46-61
- Wildenstein 2001: Daniel Wildenstein, *Gauguin, Premier itinéraire d'un sauvage, Catalogue de l'œuvre peint (1873-1888)*, Paris 2001, cat. no. 129, p. 147, 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: 09/2005

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Date: 10/2008





Paul Gauguin – Landscape near Rouen  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 1  
Recto



Fig. 2  
Verso with the stamp of  
the dealer Latouche (cf.  
fig. 7), above it traces of  
a stamp applied in error  
(arrow)





Paul Gauguin – Landscape near Rouen  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 3  
Raking light



Fig. 4  
Transmitted light  
shows, independently  
of the visible painting,  
denser areas in the sky  
and foreground which  
suggest multiple paint-  
layers or else a previous  
painting (arrows)

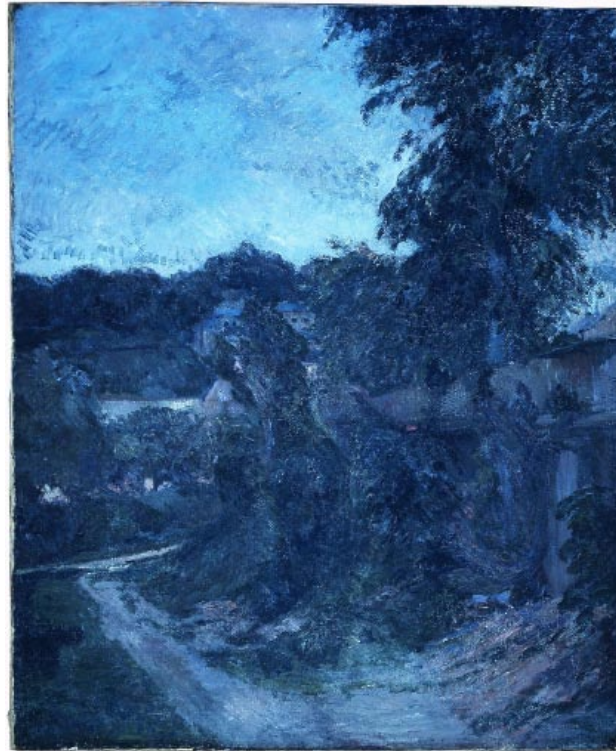


Fig. 5  
UV fluorescence



Fig. 6  
The X-ray shows, particularly in the bottom right-hand corner, a structure of an underlying, overpainted compositional lay-in unrelated to the visible picture; this structure recalls an inverted haystack





Fig. 7  
Detail, dealer's stamp of  
the Latouche company,  
under slightly raking  
light



Fig. 8  
Detail, signature applied  
to the dry underlying  
paint-layer

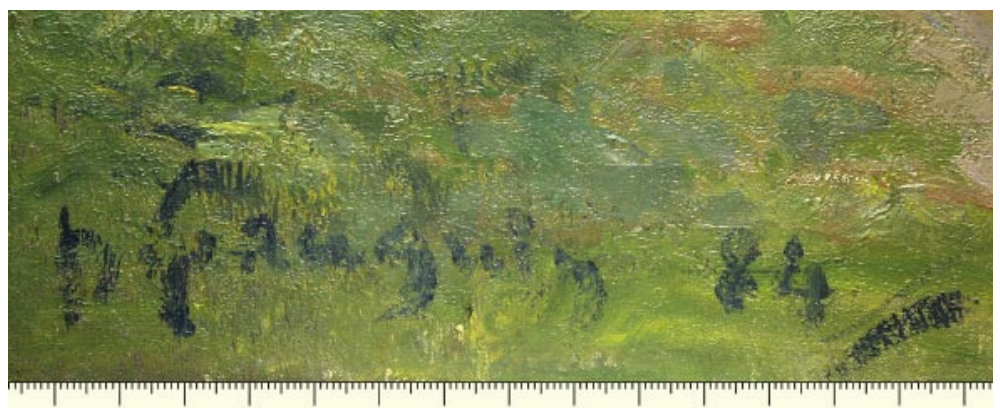






Fig. 9  
Small quantities of charcoal particles from an underdrawing (arrows), microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

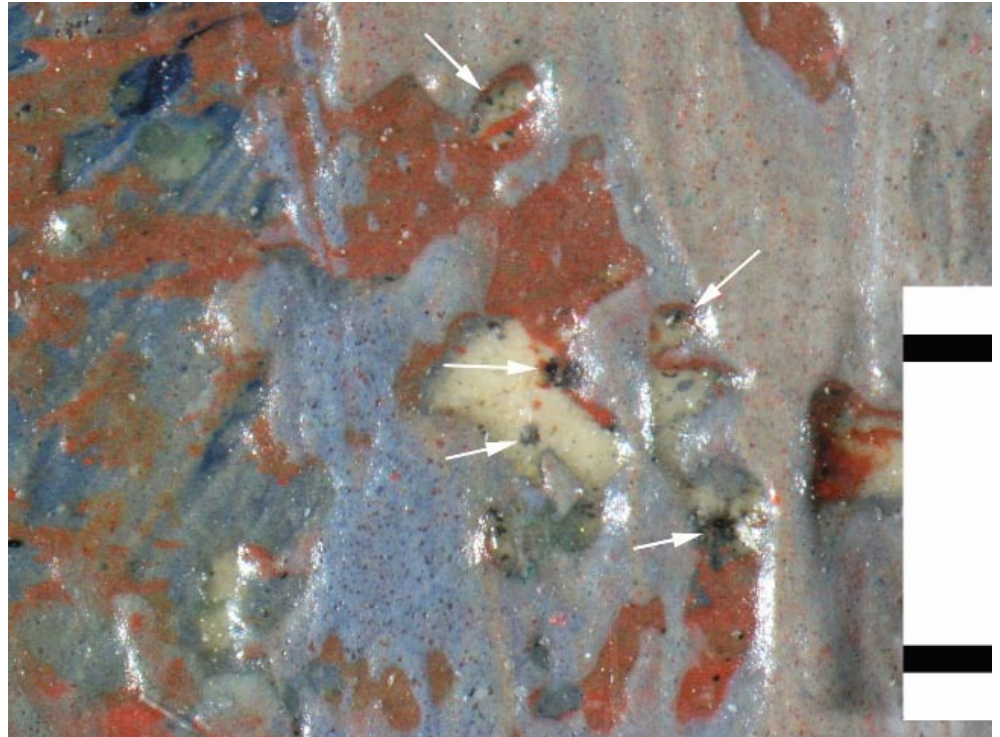


Fig. 10  
Detail, raking light reveals underlying structures of an overpainted motif (cf. fig. 6)

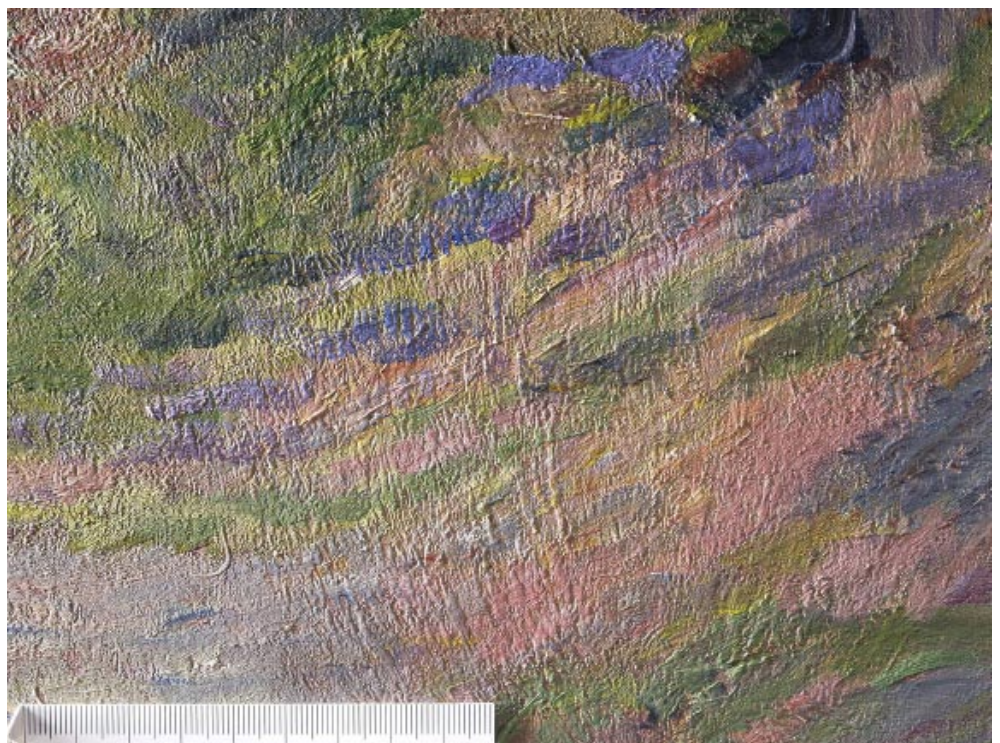






Fig. 11

Multiple paint applications applied wet-in-wet which only rake the elevations of the structure; the brushwork is clearly discernible in each case, while the coloration is different; this texture has been termed “corrugated”, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

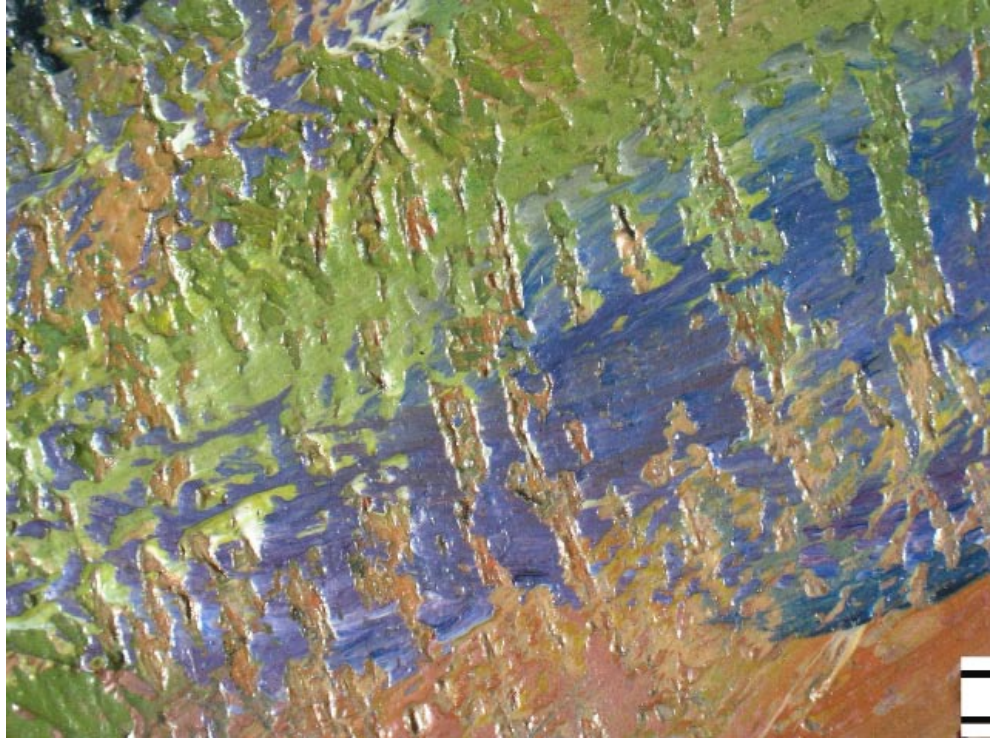


Fig. 12

Wet-in-wet paint applications, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)







Fig. 13  
Region of the track in the foreground, sequence of various colorations which derive from the canvas's having been used twice: dark blue, ochre, orange-red, grey-blue (from bottom to top), microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

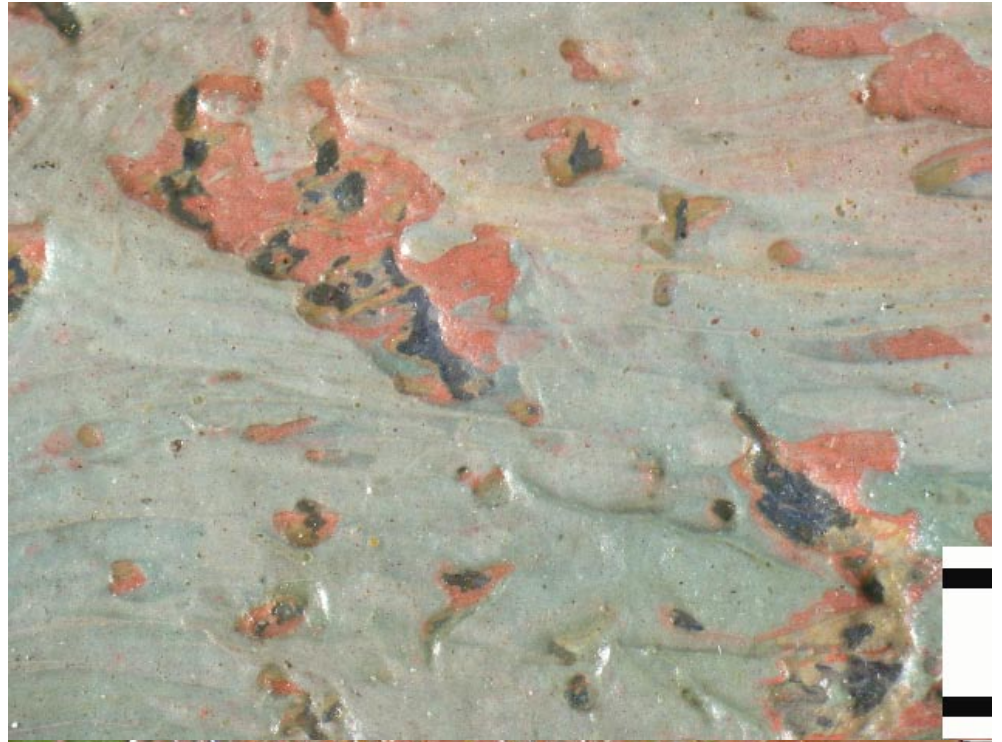


Fig. 14  
Transparent, round, solid particles, often appearing slightly yellowish, which have formed in the surface of the paint-layer or else have migrated thither (arrows), microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

