

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

19th Century Catalogue Examination Report

Artist: Camille Pissarro	Museum Number: 1922.434
Title (Date): The Place du Havre, Paris (1893)	Structure: Oil on canvas
Owner/Dept: MMEPS	Size: 59.9 x 73 cm (23 ½ x 28 ¾ in.)
Conservator: kelly keegan	Date Examined: 9 July 2012

Technical Summary:

The artist began with a commercially-prepared support with a smooth, off-white ground. Stamps on the verso of both the canvas and stretcher indicate the stretcher was purchased from the manufacturer, Bourgeois Ainé, while a local colourman, P. Contet, stretched the canvas. Primary scalloping seen in the **weave angle map** of the vertical warp threads corroborates that the canvas was prepared in a larger, commercial setting, probably as part of a 10 x 2 meter roll.¹ With a steady hand, the artist very lightly outlined the major and minor features of the composition in thin, dark blue paint, hitting only the tops of the weave. Infrared and microscopic examination indicated that the architectural features, buggies and carriages, horses and lampposts were all drawn prior to the painting stage, while most of the figures and details were added in the painting stage. The painting is marked by wet-in-wet application throughout, however the artist used fine brushes with limited mixing and working on the surface of the work to avoid a muddy appearance. The artist executed the work in a limited number of wet-in-wet campaigns and may have used *taquets bois*, or spacers, to transport the work, and a companion face-in to and from the painting's vantage point.² Changes, most visible in transmitted infrared, are limited to the carriage at the lower right just above the signature (now painted out) and the entrance gate to the train station just left of the foreground lamppost. (**overlay**) The work is currently unvarnished.³

¹ For a discussion of commercial canvas preparation roll sizes, see David Bomford, Jo Kirby, John Leighton, and Ashok Roy, *Art in the Making: Impressionism*, exh. cat. (National Gallery/Yale University Press, 1990), p. 46; and Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George, and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The Hidden Techniques of the Impressionists*, exh. cat. (Skira, 2008), p. 52.

² Such spacers were usually used for *plein air* painting and provided a method of transporting paintings between the outdoors and studio, without damage to the still-wet paint surface. It is possible they could have been used here to move the paintings between rooms during Pissarro's stay. See also discussion of *taquets bois* in Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The hidden techniques of the Impressionists*, exh. cat. (Skira Editore, 2008), pp. 92-93.

³ **I need to work this footnote out** By the early 1880s, Pissarro appears to be very much against varnishing, preferring to exhibit works under glass, as in the 1882 Impressionist exhibition. Some works, such as *Village d'Eragny* (1885, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) feature a typed note from Pissarro's daughter-in-law Esther stating both Lucien and Camille's general distaste for varnish. On the verso of *Landscape at Chaponval* (1880, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), the artist wrote "please do not varnish this picture / C. Pissarro" (**illustration?**). For further discussion of Pissarro's varnishing practices see Michael Swicklick, "French Painting and the use of Varnish, 1750-1900," *Conservation Research: Studies in the history of art, 41 Monograph Series, Vol 2* (Washington, D.C.: 1993) p. 168-9). Esther Pissarro's typed note is reproduced in Anthea Callen, "The unvarnished truth: mattness, 'primitivism and modernity in French painting, c. 1870-1907,'" *The Burlington Magazine*. Volume 135, No. 1100, p. 739-740.

Signature
Signature/Stamp: Signed lower right, wet-in-wet, green: <i>C. Pissarro / 93</i> (image MAC1 signature; MIC3 dot)
Structure and Technique
Support
Canvas: Flax, commonly known as linen ⁴
Standard Format: The original size of the canvas was likely very close to its current measurements: 59.9 x 73 cm. This corresponds to a standard Figure 20 (73 x 60 cm), the size stamped on the verso of the canvas. ⁵ (image: VRS)
Weave: Plain weave. Average thread count (standard deviation): (30)V (0.5) x (24.9)H (0.9#) thr/cm. The vertical threads were determined to correspond to the warp and the horizontal threads were determined to correspond to the weft. ⁶
Canvas characteristics: All sides of the canvas show slight scalloping corresponding to original tack placement. The weave-angle map of the vertical (warp) threads additionally shows primary scalloping, associated with commercial priming, along the left side. (image: weave angle map)
Stretching: Current stretching: The work appears to have been restretched using some of the old tackholes. Additional copper tacks were added between the pre-steel tacks at a later date for support. Original stretching: Scalloping in the x-ray corresponds to tacks placed 6-8cm apart.
Stretcher/strainer: Current stretcher: The stretcher is a five-member mortise and tenon keyable stretcher with a horizontal crossbar, or a <i>chassis à clés</i> . The <i>modèle déposé B</i> stamp on the crossbar is the registered trademark and patent mark of Bourgeois Ainé; ⁷ (image: VRS modele) depth: 2.0 cm
Manufacturer's/supplier's marks: Stamp: Location: canvas verso Method: black stamp Content: TOILES à PEINDRE à COULEURS FINES / P. CONTET / PARIS / 34, Rue Lafayette . 34 ⁸ (image: VRS contet)

⁴ Microscopic cross-sectional fiber identification by I. Fiedler, see [analytical report file name] (date).
Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

⁵ Standard sizes available from Bourgeois Ainé in 1888. Standard size chart reproduced in Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The hidden techniques of the Impressionists* (Skira Editore, 2008), p. 50.

⁶ Thread count and weave information were determined by Thread Count Automation Software. See C. Richard Johnson Jr., Don H. Johnson, and Robert G. Erdmann, "Thread Count Report: *Place du Havre and Rue d'Amsterdam, Morning, Sunlight*, 1893 (PS986/1922.434)" July 2012. [link to pdf]

⁷ See discussion of stretchers in Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The hidden techniques of the Impressionists* (Skira Editore, 2008), pp. 50-51. This stamp is also found on Van Gogh's *The Bedroom* in AIC collection. (add if more Pissarro (and other artists?) paintings with BA stretchers.)

⁸ This stamp has been noted on Pissarro's *Boulevard Montmartre, morning, cloudy weather* (1897, National Gallery of Art, Melbourne). Image reproduced in *Artists' Colourmen*, National Gallery, Melbourne online project: <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/conservation/colourmen/contet/boulevard-montmartre> (accessed 12 Sept. 2012). Contet was associated with Latouche, located at 34 rue Lafayette from c. 1870-1886. See Stéphanie Constantin, "The Barbizon Painters: A Guide to Their Suppliers," *Studies in Conservation* 46, 1 (2001), p. 64-5.

<p>Number: Location: canvas verso Method: black stamp Content: 20 (image: VRS 20)</p> <p>Stamp: Location: stretcher Method: black stamp Content: MODÈLE DÉPOSÉ / (image: VRS modele)</p>
<p>Preparatory Layers</p>
<p>Sizing: <i>If evidence of sizing, describe</i> Not determined (probably glue)⁹ <i>Not determined = no visible layer in cross section/no cross sections taken</i></p>
<p>Ground Application/Texture: The commercial ground is very smooth, and fills much of the weave texture. The ground is left visible in select areas of the composition, especially the foreground. (MAC2 exposed ground)</p>
<p>Color: The preparation appears slightly off-white with dark particles visible in stereomicroscopic examination. (image: MIC8)</p>
<p>Materials/ Composition: <i>add XRF/ ground analysis (list pigments/extenders); binder: oil (estimated)</i> <i>Footnote: state techniques used (XRF, SEM-EDX, PLM, etc.), then list materials. If two layers have very similar composition, say "both layers contain ...", then elucidate any differences, such as "the upper layer contains a higher proportion of iron oxide red, which contributes to its warm, pink color" ...</i>¹⁰</p>
<p>Compositional planning/underdrawing/painted sketch</p>
<p>Extent/character: Very fine underdrawing in blue paint visible in Infrared and microscopic examination outlines the architecture and larger features including the buildings, windows, signs, buggies, and some of the horses. The artist often painted almost to the edges of the forms, leaving the underdrawing visible in many areas. The smallest elements of the work, including most of the figures, were executed in the painting stage. (images: IR?, mac3 underdrawing)</p>
<p>Medium/technique: The underdrawing was executed with translucent paint and a fine brush; despite the smooth ground, the drawing material only hits the tops of the weave. (mic 12/12a)</p>
<p>Revisions: No changes noted in planning/drawing stage, see Paint Layer.</p>
<p>Paint Layer</p>
<p>Application/technique and artist's revision: The painting appears to have been executed in a few wet in wet campaigns. The sureness of the</p>

⁹ The presence of a sizing layer is difficult to determine from cross sections due to previous conservation treatments (such as lining, etc.).

¹⁰ The ground composition was analyzed using scanning electron microscopy coupled with energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDX), polarized light microscopy (PLM), and X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF). For more detailed results and conditions used, see author, "report name," date. Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

underdrawing led to few changes in the painting stage. The x-ray and microscopic examination indicate each element of the drawing composition was distinctly painted, often with a small margin of exposed ground or underdrawing between the edges of forms. (image: XR) In some areas, the particular order of elements can be discerned. For example with the lampposts, the artist summarily executed the vertical forms before bringing in the surrounding foreground and crowds. Even the carriage at lower center breaks around the post. (mac4 carriage) The final touches and thicker impasto were added later, to visually separate the lamps and posts from the ground.

There are two areas of compositional change, most visible in transmitted infrared. A small section of the gate around the entrance to the Gare St. Lazare at the far left appears to have been moved up and to the right, or further back in space, upstage of the figure and carriage. At the lower right corner, changes are visible in both normal and raking light conditions. (mac5) The transmitted IR image indicates a rectangular form, likely a carriage that appears to be diagonally exiting the scene. In this stage, the painting would not have featured the carriage to the left of the signature, or the figure and carriage above the signature near the left edge. The (buggy? carriage?) heading towards the center of the scene from the right just above these features appears to have been largely present in this previous orientation, although much of the wheels and horse's hind legs were obscured. After deciding against this earlier compositional element, the artist painted out the diagonal carriage, adding additional background/street, the carriages left and above the signature, the female figure, and wheels and horse's legs. This lower corner appears to have been changed as an almost last step, as the artist signed the work wet-in-wet with the cross-hatched background.

There are two to three holes at each corner that appear to have occurred while the work was still wet. (mic4 LR holes) At times such holes may indicate the artist tacked the canvas to a board during execution. The colormen stamps on the verso and stretcher indicate a commercially-prepared support, and the edges of the composition are quite cleanly executed, suggesting it was painted on the current stretcher. Holes in the corners may also indicate the use of *taquets bois*, or similar spacers while painting this series. These spacers consisted of a small cylinder with metal points protruding from either side, almost like a two-sided push-pin. (illustration?) Such spacers were used by plein-air painters to aid in transporting paintings; with spacers, two paintings of the same size could be transported face-in without damaging the paint. Marks left by these spacers have been noted on paintings by Caillebotte and Marquet, among others,¹¹ and are usually noted as a round depression with a puncture at the center. In this case, it is possible Pissarro placed his spacers such that the cylinders did not contact the paint surface. Interestingly, the related painting *La Rue Saint-Lazare* (1893, Private Collection) (comparative ill?) the only painting from this series that is the same standard size (though executed in a vertical orientation), features similar pin-holes in the corners, visible even in reproduction. The number of pinholes, up to 3 in each corner, may be a rough indication of the number of painting campaigns.

Painting tools:

Relatively fine brushes overall, round and flat with strokes up to .5 cm

Palette:

(if pigment analysis, note pigments, and describe additional unidentified pigments in cross sections/scrapings or present visibly on the surface or under UV: Additional visual identification)

Analysis indicates the presence of the following pigments: list¹²

¹¹ Arnaud Guillaumin, *The Seine at Saint-Palais*, 1892; Gustave Caillebotte, *Garden in Trouville*, c. 1882; and Albert Marquet, *Suburb of Paris*, 1899, all in the collection of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum and Fondation Corboud in Cologne, show indications of the use of these spacers. See *Research Project Painting Techniques of Impressionism and Postimpressionism*, online catalogue:

http://www.museenkoeln.de/ausstellungen/wrm_0802_impressionismus/info_e.asp?lang=en&id=1 ; See also discussion of *taquets bois* in Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint-George and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The hidden techniques of the Impressionists* (Skira Editore, 2008), pp. 92-93.

¹² If only one technique used or same techniques used for all pigments: "Pigments identified by [technique(s)]; if multiple techniques: pigment name (techniques used). Analysis was carried out on selected areas and may not include all pigments present in the painting. List relevant publications, internal reports, etc: see (author), "file name" (date). If XRF is only technique used, include: "XRF analysis was carried out in air. XRF does not detect

Binding Media: oil (estimated) ¹³
Surface Finish
Varnish layer/media: The work is currently unvarnished, in keeping with the artist's preference. ¹⁴ A natural resin varnish was applied in 1922 and removed in 1985; it is unclear if the work was varnished before that date. There are very light residues of natural resin varnish in areas of impasto and the verso has some staining from liquid or solubilized varnish seeping through cracks in the paint layer, either during application or removal.
Conservation History
The painting was cleaned and varnished in 1921. ¹⁵ The painting was examined in 1956, and noted to be fraying along the top edge. ¹⁶ The work was examined again for a 1957 request for loan and noted to be varnished. ¹⁷ The examination also recommends that the painting be lined and backed with masonite. The painting was examined again for loan in 1979: "canvas becoming weak; should be relined." ¹⁸ The corners were reinforced with Beva film and tissue and tacks added to the edges in an undocumented treatment prior to 1985. The painting was treated in 1985 including removal of a natural resin varnish. ¹⁹ The painting was consolidated in the lower left corner while on loan in 1993. ²⁰

Condition Summary:

The painting is in excellent condition, is unlined and maintains its original stretcher. Small holes in the corners of the composition appear to be part of the artist's technique (see Paint Layer) and seem to have occurred during the painting process. The work is currently unvarnished, however residues of varnish are still present in areas of impasto. Additionally, some varnish has seeped through cracks during application or cleaning, staining the reverse (VRS). There is limited retouching and some cotton fibers adhered to the surface of the work, presumably from the most recent cleaning in 1985.

organic pigments, if present, and has low sensitivity for elements like silicon and sodium (a component of ultramarine blue)."

¹³ The binding medium was not analyzed. The estimation of an oil medium is based on visual examination, as well as knowledge of [artist]'s technique and published analyses of [artist's] paintings. (Consider adding references if relevant)

¹⁴ **I need to work this footnote out.** By the early 1880s, Pissarro appears to be very much against varnishing, preferring to exhibit works under glass, as in the 1882 Impressionist exhibition. Some works, such as *Village d'Eragny* (1885, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) feature a typed note from Pissarro's daughter-in-law Esther stating both Lucien and Camille's general distaste for varnish. On the verso of *Landscape at Chaponval* (1880, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), the artist wrote "please do not varnish this picture / C. Pissarro" (illustration). For further discussion of Pissarro's varnishing practices see Michael Swicklick, "French Painting and the use of Varnish, 1750-1900," *Conservation Research: Studies in the history of art, 41 Monograph Series, Vol 2* (Washington, D.C.: 1993) p. 168-9). Esther Pissarro's typed note is reproduced in Anthea Callen, "The unvarnished truth: mattness, 'primitivism and modernity in French painting, c. 1870-1907,' *The Burlington Magazine*. Volume 135, No. 1100, p. 739-740.

¹⁵ H. A. Hammond Smith, Condition Assessment and Treatment Proposal, Nov. 7, 1921. Copy in Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

¹⁶ **FAS, [Sweet?]** Condition Note, Mar. 9, 1956. Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

¹⁷ Louis Pomeratz, Examination Report, Feb. 6, 1957. Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

¹⁸ Alfred Jakstas, Conservator's Report, Jul. 5, 1979. Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

¹⁹ David Kolch, Examination and Treatment Report, Aug. 9, 1985. Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

²⁰ Royal Academy, Condition Report: *The Impressionist and the City: Pissarro's Series*, Oct. 12, 1993. Conservation Object File, Art Institute of Chicago.

Frame
Design/Origin: (dealer's frame, date of framing, footnote description of previous frame if applicable) Current frame (date): <i>Narrative</i>
Previous frame (date): <i>Narrative (if applicable)</i>

Labels and inscriptions

Undated

Number:

Location: stretcher

Method: handwritten script (red paint)

Content: 22.434 (image: VRS strAIC)

Number:

Location: canvas verso

Method: handwritten script (red paint)

Content: 22.434 (image: VRS canvasAIC)

Number:

Location: stretcher

Method: handwritten script (graphite)

Content: #11 (image: VRS no11)

Number:

Location: stretcher

Method: handwritten script (graphite)

Content: 3 (image: VRS no3)

Inscription:

Location: stretcher

Method: handwritten script (graphite)

Content: g[...] / #1

Pre-1980

Stamp:

Location: canvas verso

Method: black stamp

Content: TOILES à PEINDRE à COULEURS FINES / P. CONTET / PARIS / 34, Rue Lafayette . 34²¹

(image: VRS contet)

Number:

²¹ This stamp has been noted on Pissarro's *Boulevard Montmartre, morning, cloudy weather* (1897, National Gallery of Art, Melbourne). Image reproduced in *Artistss' Colourmen*, National Gallery, Melbourne online project: <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/conservation/colourmen/contet/boulevard-montmartre> (accessed 12 Sept. 2012) Contet was associated with Latouche, located at 34 rue Lafayette from c. 1870-1886. See Stéphanie Constantin, "The Barbizon Painters: A Guide to Their Suppliers," *Studies in Conservation* 46, 1 (2001), p. 64-5.

For internal use only

Location: canvas verso

Method: black stamp

Content: 20 (image: VRS 20)

Stamp:

Location: stretcher

Method: black stamp

Content: MODÈLE DÉPOSÉ / (image: VRS modele)

Label:

Location: stretcher

Method: handwritten script (black ink) on printed label

Content: PARIS [...] affitte / NEW YORK, 3 [...] avenue / Pissarro No. 2709 / Place du Havre / asss
(image: VRS DR)

Label:

Location: stretcher

Method: handwritten script (ink) on painted label

Content: NEW YORK. 3[15?] Fifth Avenue / 6. Pissarro No. 1168 / Place du Havre / moss (image: VRS newyork)

Inscription:

Location: stretcher

Method: handwritten script (graphite)

Content: 1168 / D. R. / N. Y (image: VRS DRNY)

Post-1980

Stamp:

Location: stretcher

Method: blue stamp

Content: Inventory – 1980 – 19[81] (image: VRS inv)

Label:

Location: backing board

Method: printed label

Content: THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO / artist Camille Pissarro / title “The Place du Havre, Paris” 1893 / medium oil on canvas / credit Potter Palmer Collection / acc. # 1922.434 / LZ-341-001 1M 1/90 (Rev. 1/90) (image: VRS bbAIC)

Label:

Location: backing board

Method: printed and typed label

Content: Dallas Museum of Art / 1717 NORTH HARWOOD, DALLAS TEXAS 75201 ● TELEPHONE (214) 922-1200 / “THE IMPRESSIONIST AND THE CITY: PISSARRO’S SERIES” / Dallas Museum of Art: 15 Nov. 1992 – 31 Jan. 1993 / Philadelphia Museum of Art: 7 Mar. – 6 Jun. 1993 / Royal Academy of Arts: 2 Jul. – 10 Oct. 1993 / 19. Place du Havre, Paris, 1893 / 60.1 x 73.5 cm / The Art Institute of Chicago, Potter Palmer / Collection / Catalogue no. 38 (image: VRS bbDallas)

Label:

Location: backing board

Method: typed and handwriting on printed label

For internal use only

Content: ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, PICCADILLY, LONDON W1V / 38 / *Exhibition: Pissarro / Dates: 2 July – 10 October 1993 / Artist: Camille Pissarro / Title: Place du Havre, Paris / 1893 / Lender: The Art Institute of Chicago / Key No: 8* (image: VRS bbRoyal)

Label:

Location: backing board

Method: printed label

Content: GLAZING MATERIAL / Schott Amiran TN / Shatterproof-Laminated-Glass (image: VRS bbAmiran)

Label:

Location: backing board

Method: printed label

Content: DO NOT TAPE (image: VRS bbAmiran)

Label:

Location: backing board

Method: handwritten script (graphite) on printed label

Content: Panel Insert / Installation Date / 2-22-08 (image: VRS bbinsert1)

Label:

Location: backing board

Method: handwritten script (graphite) on printed label

Content: Panel Insert / Installation Date / 2-22-08 (image: VRS bbinsert2)

Examination and Analysis Techniques

X-radiography

Westinghouse X-ray unit, scanned on Epson Expressions 10000XL flatbed scanner
(when applicable) scans digitally composited by Robert G. Erdmann, University of Arizona.

Infrared Reflectography

Inframetrics Infracam with 1.5 – 1.73 μ m filter; FUJIFILM S5 Pro with X-Nite 1000B – 2mm filter (1.0-1.1 μ m); Goodrich/ Sensors Unlimited SU640SDV-1.7RT (H filter = 1.1 – 1.4 μ m; J filter = 1.5 – 1.7 μ m)

Transmitted Infrared

FUJIFILM S5 Pro with X-Nite 1000B – 2mm filter (1.0-1.1 μ m)

Visible light

Normal-light, raking-light, and transmitted-light overalls and macrophotography: FUJIFILM S5 Pro, with X-NiteCC1 filter

Ultraviolet

FUJIFILM S5 Pro, with X-NiteCC1 filter and Kodak Wratten 2E filter

High-resolution visible light (and UV)

Sinar P3 camera with Sinarback evolution 75H (add filters)

Microscopy and photomicrographs

Sample and cross section analysis using Zeiss AxioPlan2 Research Microscope equipped with reflected light/UV fluorescence and a Zeiss AxioCam MRc5 digital camera. (Types of illumination used: darkfield, DIC (Differential Interference Contrast), and UV fluorescence. In situ photomicrographs with Wild Heerbrugg M7A StereoZoom Microscope fitted with Olympus DP71 microscope digital camera.

For internal use only

X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy (XRF)

Several spots on the painting were analyzed in situ with a Bruker/Keymaster TRACeR III-V with Rhodium tube.

Polarized Light Microscopy (PLM)

Zeiss Universal Research Microscope

Scanning Electron Microscopy/Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy (SEM/EDX)

Cross sections analyzed after carbon coating with Hitachi S3400-N-II VPSEM with Oxford EDS and Hitachi solid state BSE. Analysis was performed in the EPIC facility of the NUANCE Center at Northwestern University.

Automated thread counting

Thread count and weave information were determined by Thread Count Automation Software.²²

Image Registration Software:

Overlay images registered using a novel image-based algorithm developed by Damon M. Conover (GW), Dr. John K. Delaney (GW, NGA), and Murray H. Loew (GW) of the School of Engineering and Applied Science, The George Washington University, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.²³

Camera info does not include fstop, ISO, exposure, etc.; XR does not include kV, etc.

²² See Don Johnson, C. Richard Johnson, et al., "A Thread Counting Algorithm for Art Forensics," *Proceedings of the 13th Annual IEEE Digital Signal Processing Workshop* (Jan. 2009), pp. 679–84, DSP 12.2.

²³ See Damon M. Conover, John K. Delaney, Paola Ricciardi, and Murray H. Loew, "Towards Automatic Registration," *Computer Vision and Image Analysis of Art II, Proceedings of SPIE* 7869 (2011).