

French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor



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Charles François Daubigny, *The Banks of the Oise at Auvers*, 1874

Artist	Charles François Daubigny, French, 1817–1878
Title	<i>The Banks of the Oise at Auvers</i>
Object Date	1874
Medium	Oil on wood panel
Dimensions (Unframed)	15 3/8 x 26 5/16 in. (39.1 x 66.8 cm)
Signature	Signed and dated lower left: Daubigny 1874
Credit Line	The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 33-164

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Catalogue Entry

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The Banks of the Oise at Auvers demonstrates Charles François Daubigny's ability as arguably the leading French painter of rivers in the mid-nineteenth century. It

represents a tranquil view on the Oise, a tributary of the Seine. Poplar trees grow on the left bank, while the calm, silvery surface of the water is animated by scattered white and yellow lilies as well as touches of pink and lavender. A line of trees to the right casts a reflection in the water, while the distant, warm light suggests an early evening scene. Daubigny further animates his view with two figures rowing a boat in the shadow of the trees. The artist displays a range of techniques, including rapid wet-into-wet paint application in zigzagging brush marks, visible on the left edge of the riverbank, and the use of a palette knife in areas of the sky. Elsewhere, he used a cloth to dab away paint, as in an area of green wash above the boat.¹ The site of the painting can be specifically identified as the hillsides of the town of Méry-sur-Oise, on the southern bank of the Oise river. This was a view that directly faced Auvers, where Daubigny had constructed his house and studio in 1860.² It would thus have been very familiar to the artist.

Daubigny produced a wide range of work: from early historical landscapes, to agricultural harvest scenes, to Normandy Coast marines, to châteaux views. From the late 1850s on, however, he became particularly known as a river painter. The artist constructed a studio boat, known as *Le Botin*, in 1857, which facilitated his plein-air

study. Daubigny's *Banks of the Oise*, painted fifteen years before the Nelson-Atkins panel and shown at the 1859 Salon, earned him widespread praise as a painter of the "impression," years before the Impressionists. Purchased in 1863 by the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Bordeaux, it was even satirized in the press for its extreme naturalism. The French photographer, caricaturist, and journalist Félix Nadar (1820–1889) imagined a Salon spectator stripping down to his swimming trunks and trying to dive into the painting (Fig. 1). Thereafter, Daubigny continued to produce large-scale Oise views, as in his 1863 Salon painting *Banks of the Oise* (Saint Louis Art Museum).



Effet produit sur un visiteur du salon par l'eau des merveilleux tableaux de M. Daubigny.

Fig. 1. Félix Nadar, *Effet produit sur un visiteur du salon par l'eau des merveilleux tableaux de M. Daubigny* (Effect produced on a visitor to the Salon by the water in the marvelous paintings by M. Daubigny), published in "Nadar Jury," *Journal Amusant*, July 16, 1859, 2; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, département Philosophie, histoire, sciences de l'homme, LC2-1681

Daubigny became a leading figure in a colony of artists at Auvers and was often visited by artist friends, including Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875), Antoine-Louis Barye (1796–1875), Honoré Daumier (1808–1879), and Gustave Courbet (1819–1877). Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) worked in the nearby town of Pontoise, while Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), who lived in Auvers in the 1870s, is also known to have visited Daubigny.³ At times, Daubigny would entertain artists with trips on his studio boat. The social nature of his plein-air excursions is recorded in his series of etchings, *Voyage en Bateau* (Boat Trip), published in 1862. In one etching, we see Daubigny working on a panel similar in size to *The Banks of the Oise at Auvers* (Fig. 2). The artist's reputation in Auvers persisted after his death; Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), in the final months of his life, produced a group of paintings of Daubigny's garden.⁴



Fig. 2. Charles François Daubigny, *Voyage en Bateau*, 1862, etching, 4 x 4 3/8 in. (10.1 x 11.12 cm), Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, département Estampes et photographie, FOL-DC-283 (A, 3)

Daubigny produced views like *The Banks of the Oise at Auvers* to meet considerable market demand. His river views had been associated with his commercial production from the 1860s and contrasted with other, more experimental work that he produced. Jules-Antoine Castagnary noted, "In Daubigny, there are two distinctly different painters. One is severe, vigorous, disdaining little details . . . going straight to what is simple and broad, and attaining grandeur by restraining his means. . . . This is the true Daubigny. . . . There is another [Daubigny] that the crowd understands more easily and likes better: the one who makes a considerable number of the *Banks of the Oise* in a soft gray tone, or else small appealing farms, with pleasant clusters of trees. That painter, we leave to the dealers of the rue Laffitte, right, master?"⁵ Emile Zola added, "Ask M. Daubigny which of his paintings sell best. He will reply those which he values the least."⁶

Daubigny painted this particular view of the Oise on at least seven occasions, each time with varying effects of light and slightly different configurations of the staffage.⁷ Frédéric Henriet, the artist's friend and biographer, noted that, in the final decade of Daubigny's life, "amateurs and dealers endlessly requested *Banks of the Oise* and Seine. Daubigny made sure to take advantage of this taste."⁸ The earliest treatment of the motif was, indeed, probably painted outdoors, whether on the bank itself or on the artist's moored studio boat; this picture, *Bords de l'Oise, Les Pêcheurs*, is larger than the others, painted on canvas, and dates to 1864.⁹ The other six known versions, including the Nelson-Atkins picture, are all of a similar, smaller size and were all painted on panel

in the 1870s, probably indoors in the studio. The artist produced these late “repetitions”—a term that he himself used for such variants—in order to provide a financial reserve for his family.¹⁰ The Nelson-Atkins picture falls chronologically in the middle of that group. In 1872, Daubigny painted two views, including a night scene, *Moon Rising over the Banks of the Oise* (Fig. 3); in 1873, he painted what appears from the warm pink clouds to be an evening scene (Fig. 4);¹¹ and in 1874, he painted the Nelson-Atkins picture. He subsequently painted two more views, one in 1875 (Fig. 5) and another, his last version, in 1877. This series of works highlights Daubigny’s interest in the repetition of a motif, particularly at the end of his career. It complicates the conventional *idée reçue* of the artist as a spontaneous plein-air painter, a marketable image carefully cultivated by Henriët.

juror in the late 1860s and providing Claude Monet (1840–1926) with an introduction to the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel when both artists were in London in 1870–71 during the Franco-Prussian War. Daubigny’s river paintings undoubtedly impacted these younger artists, and his example encouraged Monet to construct a studio boat. Yet Daubigny’s work was also affected by that of Monet, as seen in the brighter colors of Daubigny’s field of red poppies in a painting exhibited at the 1874 Salon (Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY). The palette and lighting in *The Banks of the Oise at Auvers* is, however, generally muted, indicating his persistent interest in exploring an understated and subtle color palette.

Simon Kelly
January 2020



Fig. 3. Charles François Daubigny, *Moon Rising over the Banks of the Oise*, 1872, oil on panel, 12 5/8 x 22 7/16 in. (32 x 57 cm), Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum, Cairo. Reproduced in *Les Oubliés du Caire: Chefs-d'œuvre des musées du Caire; Ingres, Courbet, Monet, Rodin, Gauguin*, exh. cat. (Paris: Association Française d'Action Artistique, 1994), 77



Fig. 4. Charles François Daubigny, *The Hillside of Méry-sur-Oise, Opposite Auvers*, 1873, oil on wood panel, 13 9/16 x 22 1/2 in. (34.5 x 57.1 cm), Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Wade 1916.1048



Fig. 5. Charles François Daubigny, *Bords de l'Oise*, 1875, oil on panel, 16 1/8 x 26 3/4 in. (41 x 68 cm), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg, MBA 1676

The Banks of the Oise at Auvers was produced in the same year as the first Impressionist exhibition. Daubigny had been an early promoter of the Impressionists, supporting the work of Pissarro in his position as Salon

Notes

1. See technical notes by Mary Schafer, NAMA paintings conservator, October 5, 2009, NAMA conservation files.
2. This identification is based on Louise d'Argencourt's identification of the related painting, representing the same view, in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Her identification is in turn based on information provided by Daniel Raskin. See Louise d'Argencourt, *European Paintings of the 19th Century* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1999), 1:184–85.
3. Frances Fowle, “Auvers-sur-Oise as an Artists’ Colony: From Daubigny to Van Gogh” in *Daubigny, Monet, Van Gogh: Impressions of Landscape [Inspiring Impressionism: Daubigny, Monet, Van Gogh]*, exh. cat. (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 2016), 98.
4. These paintings are located in the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, s0104V1962; Rudolf Staechelin Collection, Basel; and the Hiroshima Museum of Art.

5. "Il y a dans Daubigny deux peintres bien distincts. L'un sévère, vigoureux, méprisant les petits détails . . . , allant droit au simple, au large, et atteignant la grandeur par la sobriété des moyens. . . . C'est là le vrai Daubigny. . . . Il en est un autre que la foule comprend plus aisément et aime davantage; qui a fait dans un ton doux et gris un nombre considérable de *bords de l'Oise*, ou bien de petites fermes séduisantes, avec des bouquets d'arbres agréables. Celui-là, nous le laissons aux marchands de la rue Laffitte, n'est-ce pas, maître?" Castagnary, "Salon de 1863," in *Salons (1857-1870)* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1892), 1:145. Translation from Lynne Ambrosini, "The Market for Daubigny's Landscapes, or 'The best pictures do not sell,'" in *Daubigny, Monet, Van Gogh: Impressions of Landscape*, 90.
6. "Demandez à M. Daubigny quels sont les tableaux qu'il vend le mieux. Il vous répondra que ce sont justement ceux qu'il estime le moins." Emile Zola, "Adieu d'un critique d'art," *L'Événement* (May 20, 1866): 72. Translation by Simon Kelly.
7. Many paintings depict similar views of the Oise; see, for example, Robert Hellebranth, *Charles-Francois Daubigny, 1817-1878* (Morges: Matute, 1976), nos. 234 (the Nelson-Atkins picture), 274, 353, 363, 409, and 421, and *Lever de lune sur les bords de l'Oise*, 1872, oil on panel, 12 5/8 x 22 7/16 in. (32 x 57 cm), Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum, Cairo, which is not included in Hellebranth.
8. Frédéric Henriet, "C. Daubigny," *L'Art* 25 (1881): 81. "Amateurs et marchands demandaient à l'envi des *Bords de l'Oise* ou de la Seine. Daubigny s'arrangea pour exploiter cette veine."
9. Hellebranth, *Charles-Francois Daubigny*, no. 274, p. 96.
10. Lynne Ambrosini, "The Market for Daubigny's Landscapes, or 'The best pictures do not sell,'" in *Daubigny, Monet, Van Gogh: Impressions of Landscape*, 91.
11. See d'Argencourt, *European Paintings*, 1:184-85.

Technical Entry

Technical entry forthcoming.

Documentation

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Provenance

Adolphe Benedict Hayum Goldschmidt, Esq. (1838-1918), Suffolk and London, no later than April 6, 1918 [1];

Inherited by his wife, Alice Emma Goldschmidt (née Moses Merton, 1835-1922), Middlesex County, London, 1918-January 12, 1922;

Trustees of Alice Emma Goldschmidt, London, February 8-May 26, 1922;

Purchased at her posthumous sale, *Ancient and Modern Pictures and Drawings of the late A. B. H. Goldschmidt, Esq., Now sold by order of the Trustees owing to the death of Mrs. Goldschmidt, Removed from 14 South Street, Park Lane, W., and Cavenham Park, Suffolk; Pictures by Old Masters: The Property of The Baroness Lucas of Crudwell and Dingwall (Formerly in the Collection of Thomas, 7th Earl Cowper), and from Other Sources*, Christie, Manson, and Woods, London, May 26, 1922, by P. and D. Colnaghi and Co., Ltd., London, stock no. A1093, as *On the Oise*, on behalf of Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian (1869-1955), Constantinople, London, Paris, and Lisbon, May 27, 1922-March 30, 1931 [2];

Returned by Gulbenkian to P. and D. Colnaghi, London, stock no. A1722, March 30, 1931-May 23, 1933 [3];

Purchased from Colnaghi, through Findlay Galleries, Kansas City, MO, by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, 1933 [4].

Notes

[1] Ten years prior to Goldschmidt's death in 1918, a painting with similar dimensions and titled *On the Oise* was sold from the collection of George Richards Burnett (1858–1929), London, at *Important Collection of Modern Pictures and Drawings of the English and Continental Schools*, Christie, Manson, and Woods, London, April 21, 1908, lot 108. It was purchased from the sale by dealers Gooden and Fox, London. That painting has not been definitively identified as the one now in the collection of Nelson-Atkins or associated with another known work by Daubigny.

[2] See COL3/1/2, folio 91, Colnaghi Archives, Waddesdon Manor, London.

[3] See COL3/1/2, folio 143, Colnaghi Archives, Waddesdon Manor, London. Special thanks to Ben Taylor, assistant records manager and archivist, Waddesdon Manor, London, and Mafalda Aguiar, Arquivos Gulbenkian, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, Portugal.

[4] See Waste Books COL2/2/18-Waste Book 27, folios 167 and 193, Colnaghi Archives, Waddesdon Manor, London. See also "University Trustees Meeting Minutes," May 19, 24, and June 2, 1933, NAMA Archives, William Rockhill Nelson Trust Office Records (RG 80/05).

Related Works

Charles François Daubigny, *Banks of the Oise, Fishermen*, 1864, oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 39 3/8 in. (60 x 100 cm), illustrated in Robert Hellebranth, *Charles-François Daubigny, 1817–1878* (Morges, Switzerland: Matute, 1976), no. 274, p. 96.

Charles François Daubigny, *Banks of the Oise*, ca. 1872, oil on panel, 13 3/8 x 22 in. (34 x 56 cm), illustrated in Hellebranth, *Charles-François Daubigny, 1817–1878*, no. 353, p. 118.

Charles François Daubigny, *Moon Rising over the Banks of the Oise*, 1872, oil on panel, 12 5/8 x 22 1/2 in. (32 x 57 cm), Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum, Cairo.

Charles François Daubigny, *The Hillsides of Méry-sur-Oise, Opposite Auvers*, 1873, oil on wood panel, 13 5/8 x 22 1/2 in. (34.5 x 57.1 cm), The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1916.1048.

Charles François Daubigny, *Banks of the Oise*, 1875, oil on panel, 16 1/8 x 26 3/4 in. (41 x 68 cm), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg.

Charles François Daubigny, *Banks of the Oise*, 1877, oil on panel, 13 x 22 in. (33 x 56 cm), illustrated in Hellebranth, *Charles-François Daubigny, 1817–1878*, no. 421, p. 135.

Exhibitions

Exhibition of Paintings by Old Masters, P. and D. Colnaghi, London, summer 1932, no. 14, as *On the Oise*.

Impressionism and Its Roots, University of Iowa, Iowa City, November 18–December 9, 1964, no. 24, as *The Oise River at Auvers*.

The Rise of Landscape Painting in France: Corot to Monet, The Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, NH, January 27–April 29, 1991; IBM Gallery of Science and Art, New York, July 30–September 28, 1991; Dallas Museum of Art, November 3–January 5, 1992; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, January 28–March 29, 1992, no. 58, as *The River Oise at Auvers*.

References

Catalogue of Ancient and Modern Pictures and Drawings of the late A. B. H. Goldschmidt, Esq., Now sold by order of the Trustees owing to the death of Mrs. Goldschmidt, Removed from 14 South Street, Park Lane, W., and Cavenham Park, Suffolk; Pictures by Old Masters: The Property of The Baroness Lucas of Crudwell and Dingwall (Formerly in the Collection of Thomas, 7th Earl Cowper), and from Other Sources (London: Christie, Manson, and Woods, May 26, 1922), 4–5, (repro.), as *On the Oise*.

Le Curieux, "Les Dernières ventes de la Salon," *La Renaissance de l'Art Français*, no. 1 (January 1, 1922): 509, as *Sur l'Oise*.

Exhibition of Paintings by Old Masters, exh. cat. (London: P. and D. Colnaghi, 1932), unpaginated, as *On the Oise*.

The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, *Handbook of the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art* (Kansas City, MO: William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 1933), 136, as *The Oise River*.

"Nelson Gallery of Art Special Number," *Art Digest* 8, no. 5 (December 1, 1933): 13, 21, as *The Oise River*.

Minna K. Powell, "The First Exhibition of the Great Art Treasures: Paintings and Sculpture, Tapestries and

Panels, Period Rooms, and Beautiful Galleries Are Revealed in the Collections Now Housed in the Nelson-Atkins Museum," *Kansas City Star* 54, no. 84 (December 10, 1933): 4C.

"\$15,000,000 Nelson Art Gallery Opens: Gift of Kansas City Star Publisher," *Boston Evening Transcript* 104, no. 288 (December 11, 1933): 11.

"Art Critics View Nelson Gallery," *New York Times* (December 11, 1933): 24L.

"Nelson Gallery of Art Opens," *New York City Editor and Publisher* 66, no. 31 (December 16, 1933): 10.

Paul V. Beckley, "Art News," *Kansas City Journal-Post* 80, no. 193 (December 17, 1933): 2C, as *On the Oise River*.

The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, *The William Rockhill Nelson Collection*, 2nd ed. (Kansas City, MO: William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 1941), 41.

Ross E. Taggart, ed., *Handbook of the Collections in the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts*, 4th ed. (Kansas City, MO: William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 1959), 260, as *The Oise River at Auvers*.

Impressionism and Its Roots, exh. cat. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Gallery of Art, 1964), 4, 21, (repro.), as *The Oise River at Auvers*.

Ross E. Taggart and George L. McKenna, eds., *Handbook of the Collections in The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City, Missouri*, vol. 1, *Art of the Occident*, 5th ed. (Kansas City, MO: William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 1973), 157, (repro.), as *The River Oise at Auvers*.

Robert Hellebranth, *Charles-François Daubigny, 1817–1878* (Morges, Switzerland: Matute, 1976), no. 234, p. 85, as *L'Oise près d'Auvers*.

Tom L. Freudenheim, ed., *American Museum Guides: Fine Arts; A Critical Handbook to the Finest Collections in the United States* (New York: Collier, 1983), 112.

Kermit S. Champa, *The Rise of Landscape Painting in France: Corot to Manet*, exh. cat. (Manchester, NH: The Currier Gallery of Art, 1991), 48, 154, 228, (repro.), as *The River Oise at Auvers*.

Nicholas H. J. Hall, ed., *Colnaghi in America: A Survey to Commemorate the First Decade of Colnaghi New York* (New York: Colnaghi, 1992), 129, as *The Oise near Auvers*.

Louise d'Argencourt, *European Paintings of the 19th Century* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1999), 1:184, 185n1, as *The River Oise near Auvers*.

Catherine Futter et al., *Bloch Galleries: Highlights from the Collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art* (Kansas City, MO: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2016), 58, (repro.), as *The River Oise near Auvers*.
