French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945
The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor
Armand Guillaumin, *Landscape, Ivy-sur-Seine*, ca. 1874

| **Artist** | Jean-Baptiste-Armand Guillaumin, French, 1841–1927 |
| **Title** | *Landscape, Ivy-sur-Seine* |
| **Object Date** | ca. 1874 |
| **Alternate and Variant Titles** | *Paysage d’Île de France* |
| **Medium** | Oil on canvas |
| **Dimensions (Unframed)** | 19 3/8 x 25 3/4 in. (49.2 x 65.4 cm) |
| **Signature** | Signed lower left: Guillaumin |

**Catalogue Entry**

**Citation**

Chicago:


MLA:


During his lifetime, Armand Guillaumin (1841–1927) was considered one of the premiere French Impressionist landscape artists. From relatively humble beginnings, over the course of an increasingly successful career, he rose to a position of prominence among his contemporaries and achieved considerable commercial success within Parisian art circles and abroad.¹ Together with Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) and others, Guillaumin helped redefine French landscape painting. In his approach to landscape and appreciation for industry, he ushered in a modern pictorial process for those subjects. Indeed, in 1886, the critic Félix Fénéon referred to Guillaumin as “the beautiful painter of landscapes.”² Today many of his works are represented in the collections of major museums and have been included in exhibitions of recent decades dedicated to Impressionism.³

Despite these contributions, Guillaumin is arguably the French Impressionist landscape innovator most neglected by today’s scholars. Many of his works remain largely unknown, among them the Nelson-Atkins landscape, which was previously dated 1876–1877 and
titled *Landscape, Ile-de-France.* New research reveals that Guillaumin probably completed the painting earlier and that it depicts Ivry-sur-Seine, an industrial town located along the Paris-Orléans railway, where the artist was employed. Likely painted around 1874, it may well rank among Guillaumin’s earliest and most ambitious compositions produced in and around the southeastern suburb of Ivry-sur-Seine in the early 1870s.

Extensively through the southeastern suburbs of Paris, in particular the suburb of Ivry-sur-Seine, located along the route of the Porte d’Orléans Railway. This map from the early 20th century illustrates the streets of Ivry-sur-Seine and the surrounding countryside (Fig. 1). Known for both its agriculture and industrial production, Ivry-sur-Seine offered Guillaumin a wide range of subjects, from local farmers working the fields to scenes of railroads and factories along the Seine. Guillaumin made approximately six oil paintings of the Ivry-sur-Seine landscape, including, new research suggests, the Nelson-Atkins landscape. Unlike many of his other landscapes painted from this region, in which he often depicted factories along the Seine from the north, Guillaumin opted here to depict a panoramic view from the east. Consider, for example, *Setting sun at Ivry* at the Musée d’Orsay (Fig. 2), painted from around the same time. While the Musée d’Orsay landscape offers a view of Ivry-sur-Seine from the north, the similarities in the location and factory buildings along the left of the composition clearly relate to the Nelson-Atkins landscape. To capture the latter, Guillaumin appears to have positioned himself on a hilltop, probably along the eastern Ivry plateau (Fig. 3), to paint a sweeping view of a walled garden and a rural town nestled between the fields and stretching toward the industrial horizon of Ivry-sur-Seine. In the foreground, a team of white horses are plowing a field, while another two horses and plowman at the far left further animate the scene. Guillaumin’s neutral, earthy palette—including light greens, reds, and blues not seen in earlier Ivry paintings—indicate an overcast autumn day. Categorized by scholars as a painter of industry, Guillaumin combined the active life of the rural countryside with human-made factories to create a balanced composition.

Guillaumin may have conceived of the motif as early as 1869 while working for the Paris-Orléans Railway; several sketches and pastels from Ivry-sur-Seine that predate the Nelson-Atkins landscape depict a similar composition. Dated 1869, *Landscape at Ivry* (Fig. 4) is perhaps the most strikingly similar to the painting and is considered by art historian Christopher Gray to be Guillaumin’s earliest known drawing. Rendered with soft black pencil, this sketch presents a scene along the Seine, probably showing the forges at Ivry from the east. Similar to the Nelson-Atkins landscape, the factories in the distance are largely grouped along the left side of the composition, with smoke curling up to the sweeping horizon. Additionally, the angled roof, plowman, and two

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Fig. 1. *Petit Guide Ivryen,* 7th ed. (Ivry-sur-Seine: R. Aubert, 20th century), 14–15; copy from Archives municipals d’Ivry-sur-Seine

Fig. 2. Armand Guillaumin, *Sunset at Ivry,* 1873, oil on canvas, 25 5/8 x 31 7/8 in. (65 x 81 cm), Musée d’Orsay, Paris, RF 1955-34

Guillaumin came from a working-class family, and as early as 1861 he held a position as a clerk for the Paris-Orléans Railway while studying painting at the Académie Suisse. As an employee for the railway, he traveled

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The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art | French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945
horses in the left foreground are present in both this sketch and in the Nelson-Atkins landscape. Although similar in terms of site and subject matter, these two works differ markedly in their spatial composition. In 1869, the twenty-four-year-old Guillaumin had not yet reached his artistic maturity; he struggled to convey effectively the spatial relationship between the plowman and two horses in the foreground to the angled roof in the middle distance and the factories along the horizon. By 1874, Guillaumin dispensed with the conventional foreground, a strip of land seen in the sketch, and opted for a panoramic view, thereby placing the viewer immediately on the hilltop landscape by way of a retaining wall in the right foreground.

Paris, specifically to Auvers-sur-Oise and Pontoise. During the height of this working relationship in the early 1870s, they shared a studio and produced nearly identical views from the same vantage points.¹² A comparison of the present painting to works by Cezanne from around 1874 offers important insight into Guillaumin’s development as an artist and this period of mutual influence.¹³ Under Cezanne’s guidance, Guillaumin began reworking his earlier compositions, paying considerable attention to the underlying structure, including the surrounding fields and houses. Meanwhile, Cezanne, in response to Guillaumin, adopted the latter’s use of strong architectural diagonals to guide viewers into works such as his Panoramic View of Auvers (Fig. 5). Even the view beyond is animated by the diagonal slopes seen in Guillaumin’s countryside views. Guillaumin’s brushwork also influenced Cezanne; note how Guillaumin applied thick, parallel brushstrokes to the retaining wall, to the figures in the foreground, and even along the horizon to construct dimension. These hatched brushstrokes are a precursor to Cezanne’s “constructive stroke,” developed around 1877.¹⁴ Both landscapes are foundational examples of the artists’ collaboration and shared influence, which ultimately helped redefine French landscape painting.

This compositional change was influenced by Guillaumin’s work alongside Cezanne in the early 1870s. The two artists became acquainted in 1861 when they both studied at the Académie Suisse in Paris. They quickly became friends and frequently traveled outside

A promised gift of Robert L. Bloch, Landscape, Ivy-sur-Seine is newly recognized as an important example of Guillaumin’s early development as a landscape artist. Indeed, the painting was featured in a 2021 exhibition organized by the Nelson-Atkins entitled Among Friends:
Guillaumin, Cézanne, Pissarro, highlighting the artist’s creativity, exchange, and friendship with Cézanne and Pissarro.\textsuperscript{15}

Danielle Hampton Cullen  
April 2021

Notes


2. Félix Fénéon, “Les Impressionnistes en 1886,” La Vogue (1886): 395. “Et ce coloriste furieux, ce beau peintre de paysages gorgés de sèves et haletants, a restitué à toutes ses figures humaines une robuste et placide animalité” (“And this furious colorist, this beautiful painter of breathless and sap-drenched landscapes, has restored to all his human figures a robust and placid animality”). Translation by the author.


9. James H. Rubin identified five of these works, excluding the Nelson-Atkins painting, as the first concentrated works by an Impressionist on a clearly industrial motif. See James Rubin, “Factories and Work Sites,” in Impressionism and Modern Landscape: Productivity, Technology, and Urbanization from Manet to Van Gogh (Berkeley: University of California, 2008), 132–34, 216n43.

10. A postcard depicts the route that ran from Fort de Bicêtre to Fort d’Ivry. See Ivry-Centre, Transformation(s) d’un quartier.


The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art | French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945
moved to 15 Quai d’Anjou, while Guillaumin lived at no. 13. For more on this, see John Rewald’s chapter, “Cézanne and Guillaumin,” in Études d’art Français offertes a Charles Sterling (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), 344.


14. For more on Cézanne’s constructive stroke and Guillaumin’s possible influence, see Rewald, “Cézanne and Guillaumin,” 346–47. See also Rubin, “Armand Guillaumin and Paul Cezanne in Ile-de-France,” 67–68.

15. Among Friends: Guillaumin, Cézanne, Pissarro was held at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art from February 12 to January 23, 2022. No catalogue was produced.

The ground layer does not extend to the outermost edges of the picture plane (Fig. 7), which raises intriguing questions concerning the original size of the canvas and its relationship to both the existing stretcher and the dimensions of the ground layer application. The ground layer was applied after the canvas was attached to its stretcher, as it does not exhibit the same cusping pattern as the canvas. Instead, it seems that once the canvas was affixed to its stretcher, edging tape was placed along the tacking margins and perimeters of the picture plane. The ground layer was then applied, forming a thick bead of ground material along the priming edges (see arrow in Figure 7). When considering standard-format supports, the stretcher is close in size to a Lefranc et Cie no. 15 paysage, varying by only a few millimeters in the shorter direction, further indicating that the current dimensions are likely original.
Guillaumin began the composition by placing a few quick lines of an underdrawing on top of the white ground. These lines, identified through microscopy and infrared reflectography, appear to be composed of charcoal, with coarse black particles easily distinguished from the finer paint particles. Although brief, the underdrawing established the horizon line with parallel marks (Fig. 8) and a vertical hatch to place the largest smokestack (Fig. 9). A few black particles are also visible between skips in the paint around the red-roofed building, perhaps indicating that the artist similarly marked the placement of this structure.

While there is no overall underpainting, Guillaumin appears to have laid in a bluish-gray wash in the sky near the horizon (Fig. 10). This, however, does not extend across the entire sky, as there are glimpses of exposed ground throughout the sky, especially approaching the canvas edges. In other parts of the landscape, no similar underlying wash is apparent, and exposed ground is visible within and around the distant buildings, farmland, and foreground structures. Guillaumin painted these elements directly on top of the ground layer before completing the surrounding landscape (Fig. 11).
applications reveals that *Landscape, Ivy-sur-Seine* was completed over multiple sessions. While the tightly spaced buildings formed by short brushstrokes draw the eye to the horizon, the lighter stone structure in the left foreground, composed with soft hatches of simple admixtures of yellows, blues, and greens over a tan foundation, draws the eye down (Fig. 13). In comparison to these small strokes and hatched lines, the artist created the dynamic clouds with swirls of blues, greens, and violets (Fig. 14). After the composition had nearly dried, final touches were added, such as the clotheslines in the lower right (Fig. 15) and the figures in the distance.

The painting is in good condition. At an unknown date, the painting received a glue-paste lining, which may have been prompted by the condition of the canvas. Tears at the tacking margin, now stabilized by the lining, suggest that the canvas had become weak and embrittled. In 1978, the painting was cleaned, and minimal retouching was applied. The present varnish dates to this treatment and, although slightly discolored from age, does not interfere with the painting’s legibility.

Throughout the landscape, brushstrokes intermingle with adjacent strokes, illustrating wet-over-wet paint application. For example, the larger central figure and horses were completed with small, curved strokes blending slightly with the still-wet underlying paint (Fig. 12). Conversely, the presence of wet-over-dry paint
Diana M. Jaskierny
May 2022

Notes

1. Openings are only visible in areas where there is no ground or priming material.

2. The distance between the turnover edge and edge of the ground layer varies between each of the four sides, ranging from two to five millimeters.

3. Since Guillaumin was known to use unprimed canvases at times, it is possible that the artist purchased this canvas unprimed and added the priming layer himself. Anthea Callen, *The Art of Impressionism: Painting Technique and the Making of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 67.


5. While the existing stretcher appears older and could be contemporaneous to the painting, it is unknown if it is the original stretcher or an early replacement from when the painting was lined.

6. Similar brief underdrawings were found in Guillaumin’s *The Sea at Saint-Palais* (1892; Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne) and *Rock at Baumette Point* (1893; Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne). While these underdrawings were also composed of few lines to place compositional elements, in these paintings the underdrawings are described as being composed of fine particles. Caroline von Saint-George and Anneget Volk, “Armand Guillaumin—*The Sea at Saint-Palais*, Brief Report on Technology and Condition,” in *Research Project Painting Techniques of Impressionism and Postimpressionism*, 2008, https://forschungsprojekt-impressionismus.de/bilder/pdf/7_e.pdf. See also Caroline von Saint-George and Anneget Volk, “Armand Guillaumin—Rock at Baumette Point, Brief Report on Technology and Condition,” in *Research Project Painting Techniques of Impressionism and Postimpressionism*, 2008, https://forschungsprojekt-impressionismus.de/bilder/pdf/8_e.pdf.

7. No underdrawing was found to establish the structures in the foreground, any figures, or the larger structures in the far-right background.


Documentation

Citation

Chicago:


Provenance


Purchased from Bullrich, Arte y Antigüedades, September 20–23, 1971, lot 27, as Paisaje de los alrededores de Paris [1];

Sausserre Collection, Paris;


Purchased from Galerie Schmit, Paris, by Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Bloch, June 8, 1978 [3];

Notes

[1] Seller and buyer is currently unknown, but see annotated sales catalogue in the Collection of Frick Art Reference Library, New York, which says “3800” in the left margin.


Related Works

Armand Guillaumin, The Seine at Ivy, ca. 1869, oil on wood, 12 x 15 1/2 in. (30.5 x 39.5 cm), Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva.


Armand Guillaumin, Forges at Ivy in the Snow, ca. 1873, oil on canvas, 13 x 18 1/8 in. (33 x 46 cm), private collection; illustrated in G. Serret and D. Fabiani, Armand Guillaumin 1841–1927 (Paris: Mayer, 1971), no. 18.

Armand Guillaumin, Sunset at Ivy, 1873, oil on canvas, 25 5/8 x 31 7/8 in. (65 x 81 cm), Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

Armand Guillaumin, Snow at Ivy, 1873, oil on canvas, 20 1/2 x 28 3/4 in. (52 x 73 cm), Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva.

Preparatory Works


Armand Guillaumin, Landscape with Factory Chimneys, undated, pastel, 8 5/16 x 14 13/16 in. (21 x 37.5 cm), location unknown; illustrated in Tableaux Modernes (Paris: Sotheby’s, December 16, 2012), unpaginated.

Armand Guillaumin, Landscape at Ivy, 1869, charcoal and black chalk, location unknown; illustrated in Christopher Gray, Armand Guillaumin (Chester, CT: Pequot Press, 1972), 3.

Exhibitions

Naissance de l’impressionnisme, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux, May 3–September 1, 1974, no. 92, as Paysage d’île-de-France.

VIIIe Biennale des Antiquaires, Galerie Schmit, Paris, September 23–October 10, 1976, no. 20, as Paysage d’Île-de-France.


Art Museum, March 18–July 14, 2014, no. 139, as Landscape, Île de France.


References


