



Cat.1 Camille Pissarro, *Quai du Pothuis, Pontoise*, 1868
Oil on canvas, 52 x 81 cm

To Paris!

Camille Pissarro made his first drawings and oil paintings in his native town of Charlotte Amalie (now the US Virgin Islands, then a Danish colony) and while travelling in Venezuela with the Danish painter Fritz Melbye. By the time he settled in Paris in 1855, he had made up his mind to build a career as an artist. He soon found role models among the painters of the Barbizon School.

This group of landscapists, formed in the 1830s, was named after the small village on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau near Paris, where the artists gathered in the summer. Rejecting traditional academic themes such as mythology and history, they turned instead to painting the local hamlets, villages and the surrounding countryside – subjects previously deemed unworthy of art. They also abandoned studio work for open-air painting, to better capture their impressions of nature. Charles-François Daubigny, Théodore Rousseau and Jules Dupré were among the first of the Barbizon artists, with Jean-François Millet joining at a later date. Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot was also a frequent guest at Barbizon.

By the time Pissarro met this older generation of artists, they were well established, but the group was still imbued with the spirit of artistic revolution. Following their example, Pissarro undertook to continue his education without formal artistic training, independent of the Académie des Beaux-Arts which dominated French art at that time. He deliberately sought out teachers who would help him to make progress in his painting and to challenge the traditional hierarchy of genres. Corot was a particularly important mentor; at the Salon exhibitions of 1864 and 1865 – the first at which Pissarro was invited to show his work – he described himself as Corot's pupil.

In the 1850s and early 1860s, the influence of the Barbizon School is still palpable in Pissarro's paintings, but from the mid-1860s onwards his large-format landscapes are compellingly independent. These paintings mark his artistic breakthrough and were well received by fellow artists and critics alike. In *The Village Screened by Trees* [*Le Village à travers les arbres*], 1869 (cat. 6), we can observe techniques that Pissarro and other like-minded artists were starting to explore and that would prepare the ground for Impressionism: the use of bright, harmonious colours; a lack of rigorously drawn lines; varied, increasingly loose brushstrokes; and subtle contrasts of light and shade.

Only few paintings have survived from Pissarro's early years as an artist. In 1870 the Franco-Prussian War forced him and his family to flee their Pontoise home – first to Normandy, where they stayed on the farm of his friend Ludovic Piette-Montfoucault, and then to London. When Pissarro came back to France after the brutal suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, he discovered that his house had been looted and almost all his art destroyed. His return marked a fresh start in life and art. While in London, Pissarro had married Julie Vellay, the mother of his children; he had also made the acquaintance of Paul Durand-Ruel, the art dealer who was to become one of the greatest champions of Impressionism in France and the United States.



Cat. 2 Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *The Italian Villa behind the Pines*, 1855–65
Oil on canvas, 154.4 × 112 cm



Cat. 3 Charles-François Daubigny, *The Studio Boat*, 1867–72
Oil on canvas, 171.5 × 147 cm



Cat. 4 Alfred Sisley, *Avenue of Chestnut Trees near La Celle-Saint-Cloud*, 1867
Oil on canvas, 95 × 122 cm



Cat.5 Camille Pissarro, *La Varenne-Saint-Hilaire Viewed from Champigny*, 1863
Oil on canvas, 49.6×74 cm



Cat. 6 Camille Pissarro, *The Village Screened by Trees*, c.1869
Oil on canvas, 55.2 × 45.4 cm



Cat. 7 Camille Pissarro, *Houses at Bougival*, 1870
Oil on canvas, 88.9×116.2 cm



Unknown photographer, Camille Pissarro on a bench in the garden of his house in Pontoise, c.1874, Archives Musée Camille-Pissarro, Pontoise

The Road to Impressionism

In the 1860s, Camille Pissarro frequented the Académie Suisse, an independent studio where, in return for a small sum of money, it was possible to work from live models, with neither teaching nor examinations. There he met Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne and Arnaud Guillaumin, and together they experimented with innovative painting techniques. Rather than follow the early modern tradition of depicting historical or fantastical scenes, they wanted to paint life as it happened and record their personal impressions of nature.

Frustrated by the Academy's rejection of their work at the annual Salon and the state jury's inability to understand their art, Monet and Pissarro decided to take action. In late 1873 they founded the Société anonyme des artistes, peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc. de Paris [Anonymous Society of Artists, Painters, Sculptors, Printmakers, etc of Paris.] so as to be able to organise their own exhibitions in future. Pissarro drew up the group's statutes, modelling it on that of the Pontoise bakers' guild and insisting on joint liability: each member of the association was to pay a set amount and could then exhibit and sell as many works of art as he or she liked.

On 15 April 1874 the Société anonyme held its first exhibition in the studio of the photographer Nadar at 35 boulevard des Capucines. Beside Monet and Pissarro, the exhibitors included Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and one woman, Berthe Morisot. The reviews were devastating. This new group was even more cavalier with the rules than the Barbizon School and took plein-air painting to new extremes. One of their aims was to capture the play of light in their paintings, but because of the constant changes in light and weather, they had little time to record what they saw, and their work was often regarded as sketchy or incomplete.

Critics at the 1874 exhibition described the paintings as fleeting, superficial 'impressions'. Although the term was meant disparagingly, the group adopted it to create a name for themselves and the anonymous association became the 'Impressionists'. Pissarro, however, always preferred to speak of 'sensations' rather than 'impressions'.

Beside Pissarro, it was Monet and Alfred Sisley who did most to shape the idea of Impressionism as the art of impasto landscapes bathed in light. Among other things, Pissarro shared Monet's interest in snowscapes (e.g. cat. 18). Unlike the landscapes of Monet or Cézanne, however, Pissarro's are always inhabited. In the 1870s, his figures act as staffage, giving life to the countryside around the villages of Louveciennes and Pontoise, where he settled in 1872 (cat. 22).

Pissarro's *A Corner of L'Hermitage, Pontoise* [Un coin de l'Hermitage, Pontoise], 1878 (cat. 25), was the first Impressionist painting to be acquired by the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel [public art collection of Basel]. After being shown at an exhibition at the Kunsthalle Basel in 1912, it was purchased by a small group of local artists and art lovers and donated to the Kunstmuseum. It was the first Impressionist painting ever to find its way into a Swiss museum collection.



Cat.10 Camille Pissarro, *Chemin des Creux, Louveciennes, Snow*, 1872
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm



Cat.11 Camille Pissarro, *The Pond at Montfoucault, Effect of Winter*, 1874
Oil on canvas, 60×73 cm



Cat.12 Camille Pissarro, *The Cabbage Field, Pontoise*, 1873
Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm



Cat. 13 Camille Pissarro, *Morning in June, Pontoise*, 1873
Oil on canvas, 55 × 91 cm



Cat.14 Camille Pissarro, *Cottages at Auvers-sur-Oise*, c.1873
Oil on canvas, 65 × 81 cm



Cat. 15 Camille Pissarro, '*Bourgeois House*' at L'Hermitage, Pontoise, 1873
Oil on canvas, 50.5 × 65.5 cm



Unknown photographer, Paul Cézanne (center) and Camille Pissarro (right) with friends in Pontoise, c.1874, Archives Musée Camille-Pissarro, Pontoise

Pissarro and Cézanne

A Legendary Friendship

Few friendships have made such a lasting impression on the history of art as that of Paul Cézanne and Camille Pissarro. Perhaps the similarities in their lives played a part in forging the bond between them. Both went to Paris to be artists against the will of their bourgeois fathers. Both sought artistic freedom and fought fiercely against the dominance of academicism, the *École des Beaux-Arts* and the Salons. Both were – and would remain – strangers in Paris. Cézanne, who left Provence in 1861, was said to be a rough, moody character. In Pissarro he found a friend and mentor who tempered his rugged nature. While Pissarro was widely recognised by his fellow artists quite early in his career, Cézanne found no appreciation from the Impressionists. Pissarro saw to it that his paintings were shown at the group exhibitions.

When Pissarro moved to the village of Pontoise to the north-west of Paris in 1872, Cézanne followed him to nearby Auvers-sur-Oise. Their work oscillated between a radical concept of autonomy and individuality and an equally radical belief in collaboration as the basis of artistic practice. Between 1872 and 1885 they often worked side by side, studying the same motifs, mostly out of doors. A comparison of their work from this time provides insight into their mutual influence. Working together gave them a secure and productive space in which to experiment with new techniques, such as the use of a palette knife to apply paint (cat. 39). At the same time, we get a clear sense of their artistic independence. Take, for example, Pissarro's *The Côte des Bœufs, L'Hermitage, Pontoise* (cat. 43) and Cézanne's *The Côte Saint-Denis, Pontoise* (cat. 44), two paintings of the same motif. Both were painted in 1877 and exhibited

at the Third Impressionist Exhibition; both artists leave almost invisible outlines of unpainted canvas, so that the objects seem to leap out of the paintings. And yet there is a marked contrast between their respective approaches to space and perspective.

The close bond between these two very different artists is further evident in their habit of drawing and painting one another. *Portrait of Paul Cézanne, 1874* (cat. 33), is one of Pissarro's few portraits of a non-family member. Also unusual are the pictorial citations in the background: a caricature of the politician Adolphe Thiers from the journal *L'Éclipse*; another caricature of Gustave Courbet (who was admired by both artists and seems here to be in the act of raising his glass to Cézanne) and a small painting of Pontoise by Pissarro.

The collaboration came to an end in 1885 when Cézanne settled in Provence for good, but in spite of the different paths they took, the two artists remained close and continued to admire each other's work. In 1906, shortly before his death, Cézanne wrote to the gallerist Ambroise Vollard: 'Old Pissarro was a father to me. He was someone to go to for advice and something like the good Lord.'

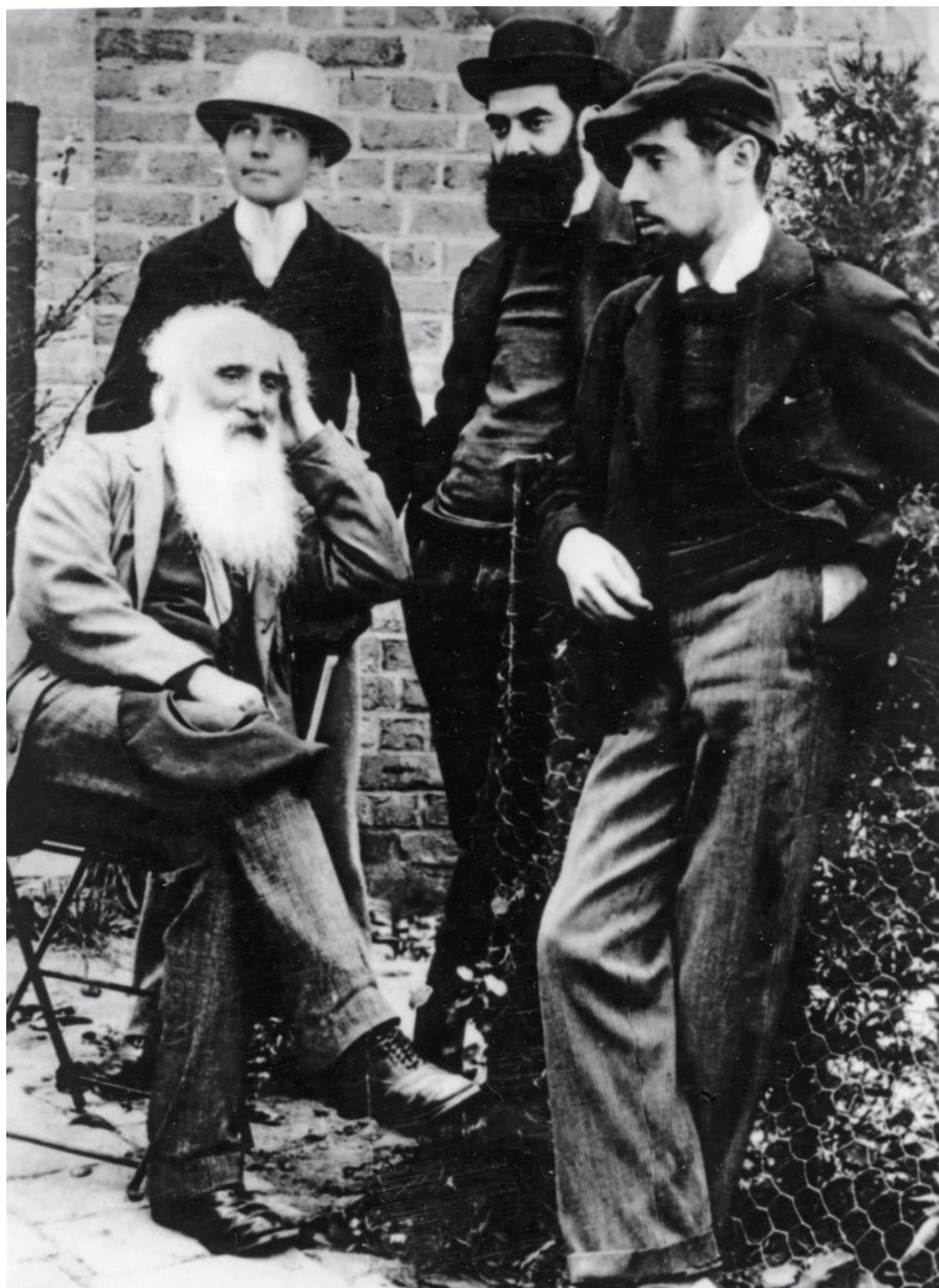


Cat. 28 Camille Pissarro, *Self-Portrait*, 1873
Oil on canvas, 55.5 × 46 cm



Cat. 29 Camille Pissarro, *Portrait of Paul Cézanne*, 1874
Etching, 26.6 × 21.5 cm

Cat. 30 Paul Cézanne, *Camille Pissarro, Seen from Behind*, 1874–77
Pencil on paper, 13 × 15.4 cm



Unknown photographer, Camille Pissarro with his sons Ludovic-Rodolphe (left), Lucien (middle) and Félix (right) in the Belgian spa town of Knokke, c. 1893, Archives Musée Camille-Pissarro, Pontoise

A New Direction

Pissarro and Neo-Impressionism

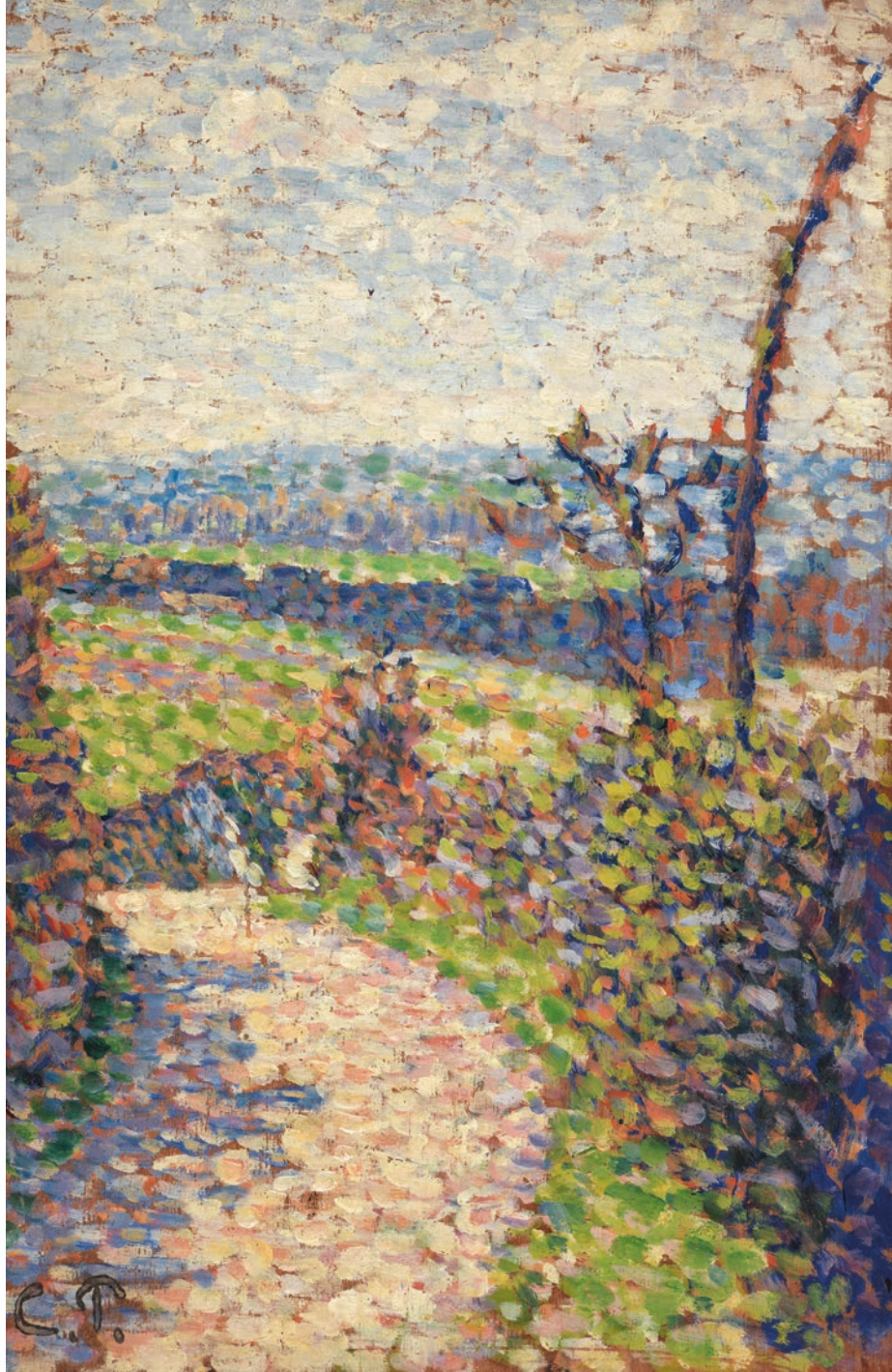
In the early 1880s Pissarro went through a creative crisis. Self-critical at the best of times, he was sent into an excess of self-scrutiny by a spate of bad reviews, conflicts within the Impressionist group and a disappointing lack of success on the art market. Only his discussions with two younger artists, Paul Signac and Georges Seurat, would provide new artistic stimulation, and he threw himself into exploring their methods.

Signac and Seurat studied colour, light and form with the precision of scientists. Inspired by new findings in optics and colour theory, they did not mix their colours on the palette, but covered their canvases in tiny dots of paint to produce bright, vibrant colours in the perception of the viewer. This aesthetic innovation was known as divisionism and pointillism. Pissarro saw it as a crucial development and considered it a successor to Impressionism.

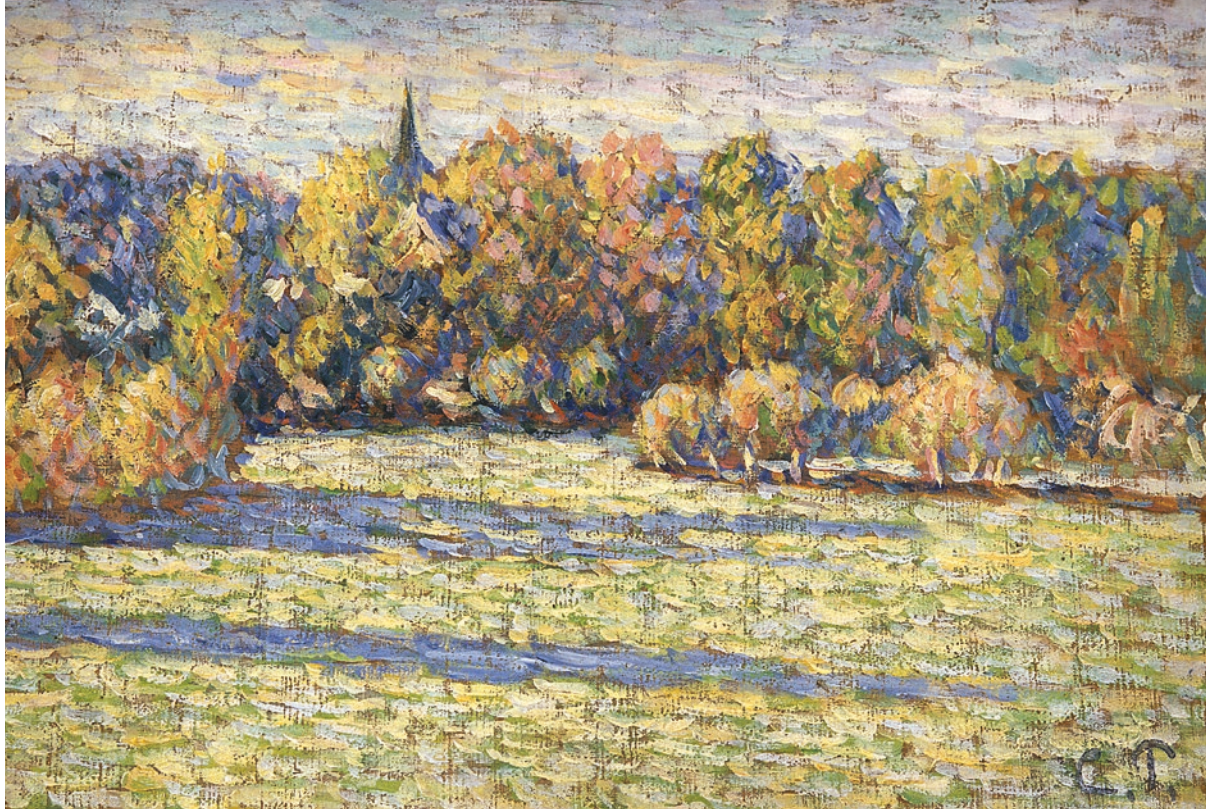
What would come to be called Neo- or Post-Impressionism seemed to point the way out of his artistic troubles. But the new aesthetic was not universally approved of. Pissarro managed to arrange for the group to take part in the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition of 1886, but the works of Pissarro, his son Lucien, Seurat and Signac were relegated to a separate room. So serious were the disagreements among the Impressionists that there were no further exhibitions. The sales of Pissarro's Neo-Impressionist works were sluggish.

Only a few years later, Pissarro expressed severe doubts about the rigid and time-consuming methods of Neo-Impressionism that condemned him to long hours in the studio. The systematic division of shapes and colours and the pointillist brushstrokes clashed with his desire to paint his sensations as he felt them.

In 1884, the centre of the Pissarros' life shifted to Éragny in rural Normandy. This not only put distance between Pissarro and the Paris art scene but awoke in him an appreciation of country life. The relationship between figures and landscape in his work underwent a radical change. The monumental figures, most of them farmers and peasants, that Pissarro painted in Éragny would be central to his work throughout and beyond his Neo-Impressionist phase. *The Gleaners* [*Les Glaneuses*], 1889 (cat.81), is a good example of a work in which he explores the interplay between figures and landscape in a Neo-Impressionist manner.



Cat. 74 Camille Pissarro, *Country Path*, c.1886
Oil on wood, 23.5 × 15.6 cm



Cat. 75 Camille Pissarro, *View of Bazincourt, Sunlight*, c.1887
Oil on wood, 20.7 × 28.3 cm

Cat. 76 Camille Pissarro, *Apple Tree in the Sunlight, Éragny*, 1887
Oil on wood, 20.6 × 28.2 cm



Cat. 77 Camille Pissarro, *Two Peasant Women*, 1881–82
Pastel on faded blue laid paper, 47 × 57.8 cm

Cat. 78 Camille Pissarro, *Study for Two Female Harvesters*, 1889
Black chalk on pink paper prepared with a thin layer of Chinese white, 42.8 × 63.8 cm





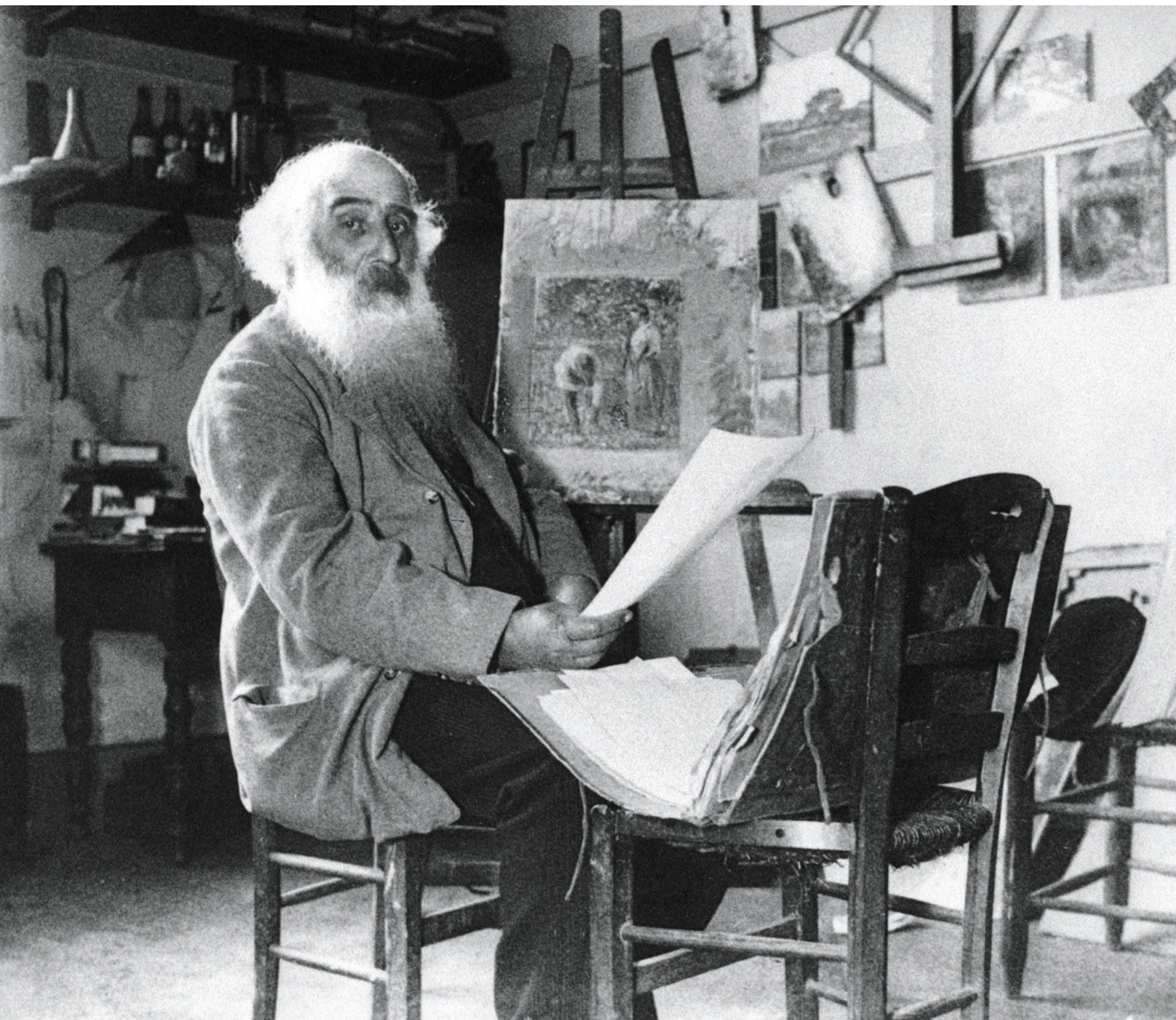
Cat. 79 Camille Pissarro, *The Gleaners*, c.1889
Gouache with charcoal, crayon and watercolour, 46.4 × 58.4 cm



Cat. 80 Camille Pissarro, *Apple Harvest*, 1888
Oil on canvas, 60 × 73 cm



Cat.81 Camille Pissarro, *The Gleaners*, 1889
Oil on canvas, 65.4×81.1 cm



Antonin Personnaz, Portrait of Camille Pissarro in his studio at Éragny, 3 November 1901, Archives Musée Camille-Pissarro, Pontoise

‘Un artiste complet’

The Many Talents of Pissarro

Camille Pissarro was one of the few Impressionists to whom drawing and printmaking were as important as painting. He made use of a wide range of materials and media, and experimented constantly with new form and subject matter, working in pencil, pastel, watercolour, dry point, lithography and monotype. His remarkable openness and willingness to experiment were perhaps a result of his lack of traditional academic training.

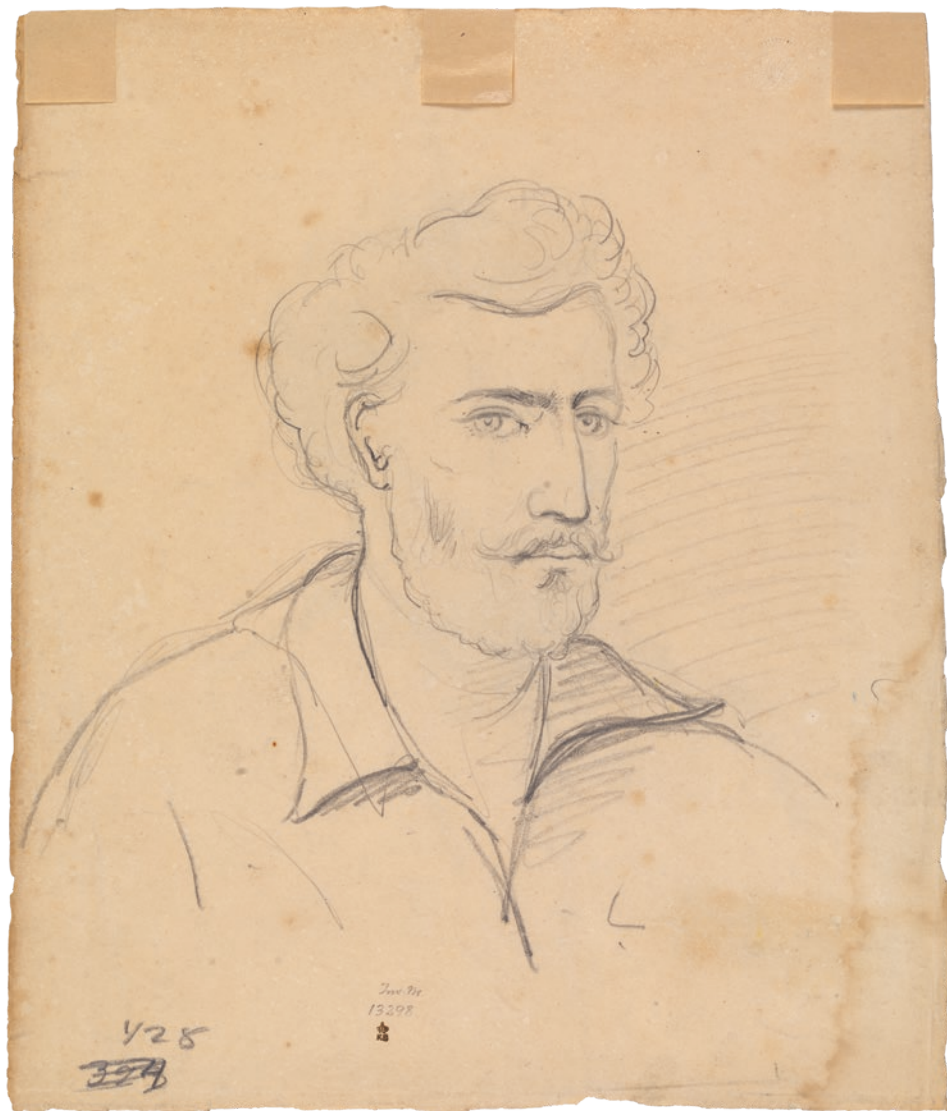
Drawing was essential to Pissarro as a way of keeping his eye fresh and his hand trained at a wide range of motifs, from landscapes to figures in motion. Only in the first years of his intense work with, and for, the Impressionists did his interest in drawing wane slightly; by the 1880s, he was once again producing a vast number of preliminary studies. All his large figure paintings are the result of countless sketches of people and landscapes. Pissarro experimented with a variety of paper and formats; hardly two of his sketchbooks are the same size. Drawing from memory was also important to him. He advised his son Lucien to try it as a way of achieving synthesis and going beyond mere observation.

In 1863 Pissarro joined the Société des aquafortistes [Society of Etchers], founded and led by Alfred Cadart; he remained a member until it folded in 1867. In 1873 the more informal Auvers Group formed around Pissarro, Cézanne, Guillaumin and Paul-Ferdinand Gachet, who signed his works ‘Paul van Rysse!’. Gachet owned a printing press and the group produced the first examples of Impressionist printmaking. Pissarro would remain a keen printmaker; of all the Impressionists, he left the greatest and most varied collection of prints.

Another area in which Pissarro experimented was fan-painting – an interesting example of art at the interface between aesthetics and commerce. The fashion was part of the *japonisme* cultivated in Impressionist circles; other artists such as Degas (cat. 69) and Seurat (cat. 91) also painted fans. Buyers liked their decorative character; artists liked the challenge of their semicircular shape.

When Pissarro’s painting was in crisis, he tried out a variety of techniques. The constraints and time-consuming nature of Neo-Impressionism, for example, led him to turn increasingly to watercolour, a medium that allowed him to record his impressions of nature swiftly and without complications.

An important motif in Pissarro’s prints and drawings was the bather (cat. 112, 113). Inspiration came from Degas and Cézanne, who had studied this classical eighteenth-century theme in some depth and re-interpreted it in their own ways. Life drawing, however, was a challenge to Pissarro, because it often proved difficult to find models, especially in Éragny, far from Paris and the surrounding artists’ colonies.



Cat. 97 Camille Pissarro, *Self-Portrait, Three-Quarter Profile to the Left (Caracas [?])*, 1853–54
Charcoal and graphite on wove paper, 30.2 × 25.8 cm (recto)



Cat. 98 Camille Pissarro, *Camille Pissarro, Self-Portrait*, 1890
Etching, 24×22 cm