



THE CONSERVATION CENTER
INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS – NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
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EXAMINATION AND TREATMENT REPORT

Number: L220859

Artist: Unknown

Object Description: Landscape
Painting

School/Period: Unknown (late 19th
century?)

Support/Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 53.5 x 95 cm (21 x 37.5
in)

Signature and Labels: Fragment of
label on the verso, with only “HT”
remaining

Owner: Pete Gallo, peteg@grossoart.com

Date of Treatment: Fall 2022

Conservator(s): Laura Richter Le and Amalia Donastorg

Supervisors: Kristin Patterson

Photographic documentation:

Before Treatment

Canon D810 camera with 60mm lens, ISO100, f8
digital photography in normal light and UV, recto
digital photography in normal light, verso

After Treatment

Canon D810 camera with 60mm lens, ISO100, f8
digital photography in normal light and UV, recto
digital photography in normal light, verso



Overview:

The artwork is in poor condition, with extensive planar distortions, stress cracks, and several tears in the canvas. The paint layer has suffered extensive damage due to the failing support, and both the recto and verso are coated in a layer of grime. There has been at least one past conservation effort, which included repairing tears and retouching. No frame is present.

The artwork was examined in normal, raking, and ultraviolet light with a Canon D810 camera with 35mm lens. A Dino Lite digital microscope was also used at 63x magnification.

Support:*Materials and Technique*

The sub-support is a four-member, keyable, wooden stretcher, which appears to be the original. Each member is around 5 cm wide, attached with open mortise-and-tenon joints. The support is a medium weight, twill weave canvas that is held to the stretcher with tacks to the turnover edge.

Condition

The canvas is not securely attached to the stretcher. The stretcher has a flat face in direct contact with the canvas reverse. There are slots for corner keys, but no keys in use.

The canvas is severely distorted and sagging. There are extensive tears and losses to the turnover edge, preventing the nails from holding the canvas tight. Towards the edge of the canvas, the weave is more open, especially around tacks still holding the canvas in place, supporting the sagging canvas and creating increased stress to the adjacent canvas threads. The recto shows accumulated grime and darkened canvas fabric. There are five large, open tears to the canvas (see condition map): a large T-shaped tear towards the center, proper right; a large complex tear at the bottom, proper right (primarily vertical); and three vertical tears. There are scattered smaller tears, as well as extensive tearing alongside the turnover edge, some of which have been adhered to the stretcher in a past conservation initiative. There is also a canvas patch from a past intervention (around 10x5 cm) addressing a vertical tear on the proper right of the painting, near the center and approximately 6 cm from the edge. Additionally, a tear in the upper, proper left side of the painting has been repaired with a thick adhesive, visible on the verso.

Ground/Preparatory Layers:*Materials and Technique*

There is no evidence of a ground layer. The canvas appears to be sized with glue, visible as a glossy layer through cracks in the paint layer (see macro photographs in Appendix). The lack of a ground layer likely contributed to the fragility of the paint layer under stress.

Paint Layers:*Materials and Technique*

The medium is estimated to be oil paint. It is thinly applied, with varying degrees of low impasto. The sky and lake are smooth and blended, while visible brushwork is found in the finer details of the foreground.

Condition

There is an extensive network of stress cracks covering the entire surface of painting and reflecting the canvas weave pattern. The network of cracks significantly decreases over portions supported by the stretcher, and where, as a result, tension on the canvas support has remained more stable. Within this border, the stress cracks increase around points where there are tacks on the turnover edge, especially alongside the right and left edges. Pinpoint losses across the paint film are centered around tears cracks. Additionally, there are four half-circle shapes along the top, proper right edge where the paint layer is noticeably thinner, revealing the canvas below. These likely originated during the original application, since the paint appears to have been smeared while wet, leaving a thin layer with small air bubbles and without significant abrasion. Past retouching is found around the cracks and edges (see condition map). The retouching is

poorly matched, thick, and in portions appears to cover original paint (see macro photography). The paint in the sky shows significant abrasion and darkening.

Surface Coatings:

There is no evidence of a varnish, including under microscopic and UV examination. Leaving the paint layer exposed could have expedited its darkening and wear.

Treatment Report:

1. Completed before treatment photography.
2. Removed painting from the stretcher.
3. Vacuumed verso of painting and cleaned with dry cleaning sponges.
4. Relaxed support distortions with dampened blotters under weights.
5. Aligned tears and losses in the tacking edge using linen bridging threads coated in Jade-R adhesive.
6. A portion of the large, T shaped tear was mended using the thread-by-thread method and 1:1 sturgeon glue to methyl cellulose (see image in appendix A). The remainder of this tear was aligned with bridging threads, and finally, the entire tear was covered with a patch of Hollytex and BEVA 371 film adhered with a tacking iron.
7. All other tears were aligned and reinforced with a patch of Hollytex and BEVA 371 film adhered with a tacking iron (see image in appendix A).
8. A lining was prepared using linen strips with a frayed and beveled edge. Using BEVA 371 adhesive, they were attached to the tacking edge and around 1-3 cm of the face of the recto on each side with a tacking iron.
9. The painting was attached to a custom stretcher with stainless steel staples. On the top and bottom tacking edge, iron tacks were added through the original tacking holes.
10. Completed after treatment photography.

Appendix A: Images

Before Treatment:



Condition Map



Recto, Normal Light, Before Treatment



Verso, Normal Light, Before Treatment



Recto, Raking Light, Before Treatment



Recto, UV Light, Before Treatment



Images under 63x magnification using a DinoLite handheld microscope. No ground was observed below the paint layer. There is, however, a thin layer of glue applied to the canvas, seen as a glossy substance through the surface cracks. Additionally, the painting shows no evidence of a varnish on the matte, painted surface. Instead, the glossy flakes seen in image 2 (and observed in the surrounding area) appear to be an adhesive, likely from a past conservation initiative.



Past retouching

Border of retouching in the sky (63x magnification, DinoLite), showing how portions cover original paint and the color is poorly matched.

After Treatment:



Recto, Normal Light, After Treatment



Recto, Raking Light, After Treatment



Verso, Normal Light, After Treatment



Map of Tear Repair