

Camille Pissarro

Young Peasant Having Her Coffee

ART
INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

This essay is part of the digital catalogue *Pissarro Paintings and Works on Paper* at the Art Institute of Chicago. Click [here](#) for the entire interactive digital catalogue.

This content downloaded from
101.99.31.38 on Mon, 28 Jul 2025 08:07:51 UTC
All use subject to <https://about.jstor.org/terms>

Chapter Title: Young Peasant Having Her Coffee

Book Title: Young Peasant Having Her Coffee from Pissarro Paintings and Works on Paper from the Art Institute of Chicago

Book Author(s): Richard R. Brettell

Published by: Art Institute of Chicago

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1vjqp7.1>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>

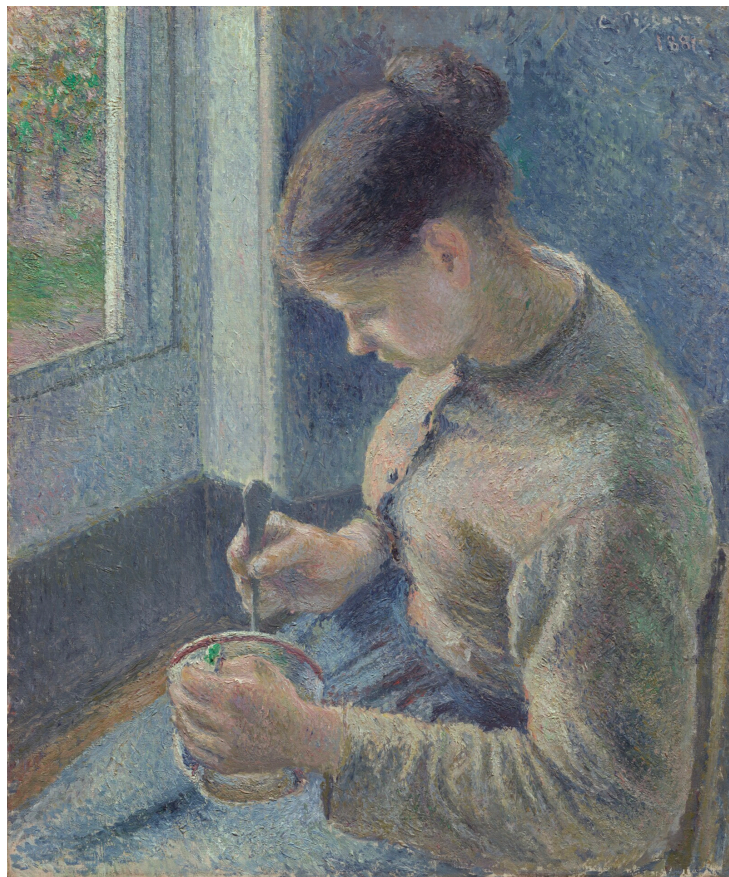


This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.



Art Institute of Chicago is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee from Pissarro Paintings and Works on Paper from the Art Institute of Chicago*

JSTOR



Cat. 10

*Young Peasant Having Her Coffee*¹
1881

Oil on canvas; 65 × 54.5 cm (25 5/8 × 21 7/16 in.)

Signed and dated: C. Pissarro / 1881 (upper right, in white paint with some red)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Potter Palmer Collection, 1922.433

After a rather long hiatus from figurative work, Pissarro began to make paintings of family members and local rural workers again in 1872 but stopped the practice after five years. It was not until 1879 that he resumed this practice, and it is fair to say that during the ensuing two years, for the first and last time in his career, his canvases were dominated not by landscapes but by people. These works were first shown at the fifth Impressionist exhibition in 1880, represented by a single large picture and two smaller works: *Woman Scraping a Pot* (1879 [PDRS 590]), *Father Melon Sawing Wood* (1879 [PDRS 610]), and *Young Girl Carding Wool* (1880 [PDRS 628]).

Pissarro's renewed interest was in full force by the seventh Impressionist exhibition of 1882, which featured at least sixteen of his figure paintings, including the present work, which was listed as number 111 in the manuscript for the catalogue under what remains its title: *Jeune paysanne prenant son café* (Young Peasant Having Her Coffee).² Pissarro's figural paintings were prominent enough in the context of the exhibition that four of them were caricatured by the satirical magazine *Le Charivari* in an article titled "Une visite aux impressionnistes" (A Visit with the Impressionists), along with seventeen other works by him, Gustave Caillebotte, Claude Monet, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (see fig. 10.1, fig. 10.2, fig. 10.3, fig. 10.4 [PDRS 640], and fig. 10.5 on page 2).³ Here, the work is given the punning title *Le café au laid* (laid, which means "ugly," sounds like the French word for milk, lait). The size of the girl's cup (see fig. 10.6 on page 2) makes it clear she is drinking café au lait, as this beverage is typically served in large round mugs. The painting had already sold to Paul Durand-Ruel, Pissarro's dealer, before



fig. 10.1 A satire of some of the works in the seventh Impressionist exhibition, published in *Le Charivari*, Mar. 9, 1882.

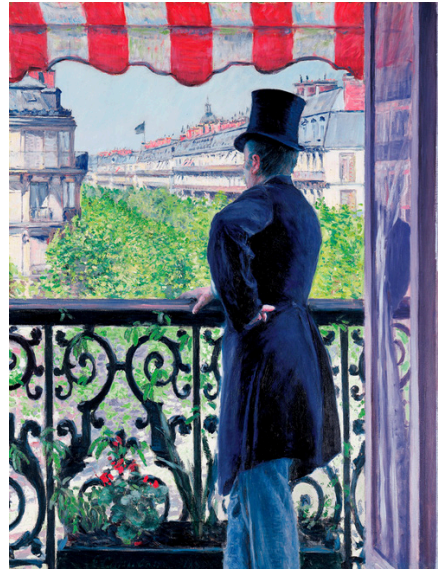


fig. 10.2 Gustave Caillebotte (French, 1848–1894). *Man on Balcony*, 1880. Oil on canvas; 117 × 90 cm (46 × 35 1/2 in.). Private collection. Photo © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images. This work was exhibited at the seventh Impressionist exhibition in 1882.



fig. 10.3 Gustave Caillebotte (French, 1848–1894). *Portrait of M. F.*, 1881. Oil on canvas; 100 × 82 cm (39 3/8 × 32 1/4 in.). Present location unknown. This work was exhibited at the seventh Impressionist exhibition in 1882.



fig. 10.4 Camille Pissarro (French, 1830–1903). *Washerwoman, Study*, 1880. Oil on canvas; 73 × 59.1 cm (28 3/4 × 23 1/4 in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Nate B. Spingold, 1956, 56.184.1.



fig. 10.5 Pierre-Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919). *Young Woman with Cat*, 1880. Oil on canvas; 120 × 92 cm (47 1/4 × 36 1/4 in.). Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts / Bridgeman Images. This work was also satirized by *Le Charivari*.

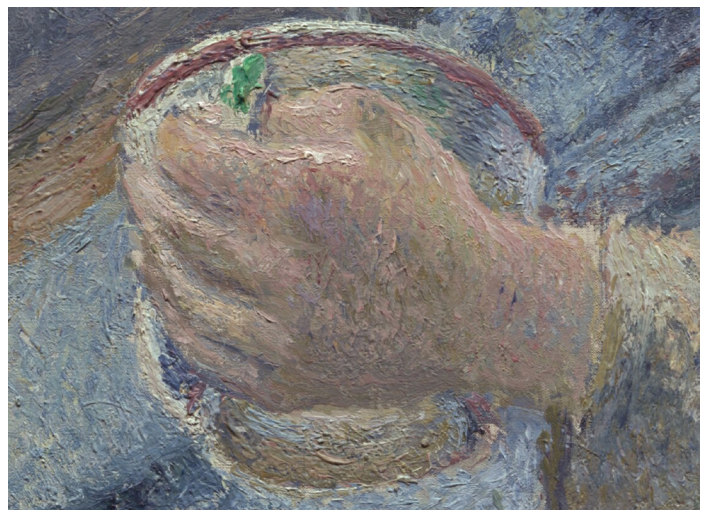


fig. 10.6 Detail of the cup in Pissarro's *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee*. The Art Institute of Chicago, 1922.433.

the exhibition, on December 19, 1881, which indicates he must have completed it by that date. In fact, all the paintings by Pissarro in the 1882 exhibition were already owned by Durand-Ruel, who had purchased most of them in 1881. *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee* was among the most critically well received of the group. It was specifically mentioned in many reviews of the 1882 exhibition, and several other critics—including some of the most prominent—did not mention it by name but did discuss Pissarro's figure paintings with real enthusiasm.⁴

The general comments about the artist's figurative work are worth exploring because they reveal a fundamentally sympathetic reaction to these experimental pictures—and also some stubborn patterns of comparison, particularly with Jean-François Millet's work, that likely disturbed the artist. For example, in his review in *La revue politique et littéraire*, Charles Bigot remarked, "Here is Pissarro, who never tires of being a landscapist but has undertaken the feat of competing with Millet's peasants. There is no doubt that his peasants recall Millet's but what good will this do for him, when this memento will only manage to erase his own?"⁵ The opinion of other reviewers of the seventh Impressionist exhibition was split down the middle. They either recognized Pissarro's innovative and fresh depiction of rural peasants—and thus his ultimate departure from Millet's style—or refused to acknowledge the Impressionist's skill without referencing his predecessor.

Some critics, however, avoided comparisons to Millet and chose to discuss Pissarro's unusual technique instead. In *Le français* C. André noted, "I will say the same about Pissarro [*sic*], who, along with Vignon, has the most qualities among these artists, but whose complex execution ruins those very same qualities. Mr. Pissarro [*sic*] has invented what I would call relief painting. His works resemble topographical maps, with peaks and valleys. At the same time, however, his rural scenes have a certain naive charm, and if the painter just abandoned his manner of execution, he would immediately be given the credit he deserves."⁶ André's comments recognize the artist's desire to make his figures breathe with life not by manipulating the subject but through his handling of color: a formal concern shared by most, if not all, of the Impressionists.

In *Le pays* Paul de Charry focused on Pissarro's portrayals of peasants, partly echoing André's ideas: "An artist with real talent as a draughtsman is Mr. Pisaro [*sic*]. The poses of his figures are truly natural and alive; one gets a real sense of movement and life breathing through his market women, dressed in vibrant colors and blending in nicely with the dusty, sun-filtered glow."⁷ By contrast, Émile Hennequin, in *La revue littéraire et artistique*, identified what he perceived as shortcomings in Pissarro's paintings related to color, but also recognized the rawness and strength of the artist's peasants, particularly in *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee*, stating, "However, the composure of his peasants, their poses, and manner of sitting and bending as well as their overall behavior are captured and communicated with accuracy and a striking degree of authenticity."⁸

Although the critics' sentiments were mixed, the favorable reviews were indeed generally positive and encouraging. Joris-Karl Huysmans, writing in *L'art moderne*, was captivated by Pissarro's depiction of the French countryside, openly rejecting his previous opinion of the artist's works and proclaiming the artist's departure from Millet. He effused,

On top of Mr. Pissarro's landscapes of the Seine-et-Oise, he exhibited a whole series of peasants, and, once again, this painter shows us another side of himself and his talent! If I'm not mistaken, I once stated that Pissarro's human figures possessed a certain biblical aura: this is no longer the case. Mr. Pissarro has completely freed himself of Millet's influence;—He paints his peasants without any false sense of grandeur and has instead portrayed them simply, just as he saw them. All of the works in this series—from the little girls in red stockings, to his older lady wearing a headscarf, his shepherdesses and washerwomen, and even his female peasant having her breakfast or gathering grass—are true masterpieces.⁹

In sum, characterization of Pissarro's work in 1882 described it as a combination of Millet and Impressionist innovation. Henry Robert in *La petite presse* focused on Pissarro's brilliant use of color and authentic depiction of country life, whereas Armand Sallanches in *Le journal des arts* also discussed Pissarro's innovative use of color as marking a clear departure from Millet: "Mr. Pissarro's paintings greatly resemble pastels. This artist has a preference for some of J.-F. Millet's own subjects, but has steered clear of his use of color There is something simply stunning in his *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee* and his landscape *Sun Setting Over Pontoise*."¹⁰

Other critics saw parallels between Pissarro's echoing of Millet and the Impressionists' embrace of their predecessors, for example citing Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's influence on Monet. As Armand Silvestre wrote in *La vie moderne*,

If the influence of Corot can be seen in the work of Monet, then the same can be said about Millet with regard to Pissaro [*sic*]. But this should not be taken as criteria for criticism. In whatever one does, there always exists lineage in terms of influence, and not so much a familial bond *per se*, but a spiritual bond, actually more in line with a distant relationship. This reminder of great artists should be considered a triumph in itself. I especially like the large figure paintings by Pissaro [*sic*] imbued with a certain rustic charm, altogether more lifelike than [Jules] Bastien-Lepage's female peasants. I will mention here the works which are most worthy of praise, and they include: the *Washerwoman*, the *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee*, the *Young Peasant Girl in a Hat*, and the two large studies bearing the numbers 103 and 104. In all of these figure paintings the same sincere expression, genuine character, and humble work ethic are present. Mr. Pissaro [*sic*] is also a poet, not a Virgil like Corot, but profoundly deeper and more compassionate to the sufferings of those less fortunate, teeming with the same emotion that inspired Pierre Dupont to pen his painfully moving odes to rural workers, unfortunately not well known to most. Pissaro's [*sic*] execution is sobering, powerful, and full of intrigue.¹¹

This extensive press coverage—less than that garnered by Caillebotte, Monet, and Renoir, but more than that earned by most of the other artists present at the 1882 Impressionist exhibition—must have heartened Pissarro in its tone and quantity, if not for its insistent reference to his debt to Millet. Pissarro was supremely conscious of being Millet's successor as a painter of rural life, and he had spent a good deal of time in the mid-1870s wrestling with his great precursor's example. Yet, try as he might not to borrow figures, subjects, and poses from Millet, he could not escape being interpreted in relation to his predecessor. Indeed, of all the critics cited above, only Armand Silvestre seems to have understood the fundamental differences between the work of

the two artists, which lies primarily in the character and emotion of Pissarro's figure paintings (although it must be noted that Huysmans, too, eventually concluded that Pissarro had distanced himself from Millet's influence).

The younger artist was so exasperated by these almost automatic links of his work with Millet's that he wrote a strong rebuttal in a letter addressed to Théodore Duret, dated March 12, 1882, during the seventh Impressionist exhibition. In it he refers to an essay by Philippe Burty. "An article by Burty was brought to my attention, one which will have a huge influence [on the way I am perceived]. He complimented me, of course—no doubt out of respect—since he was at the exhibition with [Edgar] Degas. As for the rest, all they do is compare me with Millet, but Millet was biblical! They probably make the comparison because they are particularly fond of all those artists certified as the authorities in art. Isn't it ironic that for a Jew, one finds barely any biblical reference in my work!"¹²

Although Armand Silvestre accurately understood the creative aspects of the filial connection between Pissarro and Millet, he linked the younger painter's work with that of his nemesis as a painter of rural life, the talented academic painter Jules Bastien-Lepage. It was perhaps this passage that led Pissarro to think more actively about Bastien-Lepage, because the only references to him—both negative—in Pissarro's letters are made after the 1882 exhibition.¹³ Pissarro's figure painting was read by most critics as occupying an ambivalent position given its apparent modernity of style and the utterly traditional character of its rural imagery. Negotiating this ambivalence was to be Pissarro's fate for the remainder of his life. Above all, what critics failed to understand was the anarchist political nature of his rural imagery, which was, to him, as "modern" as the fashionable bourgeoisie painted by Caillebotte and Renoir.

It would be hard, however, for critics to recognize this modern anarchist undertone in Pissarro's work, precisely because he did not openly discuss it with his Impressionist peers. He spoke openly and truthfully with sympathizers such as Octave Mirbeau, his son Lucien, and those also friendly to anarchist philosophy and Marxism. The only overtly political art that Pissarro created was *Social Depravities*, his unpublished and privately distributed album dated December 1889.

The critics not only misunderstood the meaning of Pissarro's imagery, but they also sometimes failed to grasp the import of his style, linking it both to the practice of pastel (a connection Pissarro would have endorsed) and to what André called "relief painting."¹⁴ André's comparison of the surfaces of the artist's works to a geographical relief map—although probably made as a criticism—was in fact accurate and important. Complaints about their surfaces had been made since the first Impressionist exhibition, but they reached their apogee in the 1882 exhibition, when his agitated, rough, textured facture was noted by critics both friendly and unfriendly to his project.

When reviewing the artist's first solo show in May 1883 at the Durand-Ruel gallery in the *Journal des artistes*, Paul Labarrière also noted Pissarro's rough texture and unique facture, but his remarks were much harsher than André's.¹⁵ Nearly all critics failed to recognize that the texture was a technique that Pissarro had developed by 1877 to introduce a wide spectrum of hues into relatively small areas of his canvases. This is most visible when looking at passages of the painting in detail (fig. 10.7), especially with the aid of a microscope (fig. 10.8). Indeed, what appears gray is, upon closer inspection,



fig. 10.7 Pissarro's drawing *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee* (1879/80; cat. 9) overlaid on his painting of the same title (1881). The Art Institute of Chicago, 2010.540 and 1922.43.



fig. 10.8 A side-by-side comparison of Pissarro's drawing *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee* (1879/80; cat. 9) and his painting of the same title (1881). The Art Institute of Chicago, 1922.43 and 2010.540.

anything but, suggesting that most commentators were unable to—or did not bother to—thoroughly examine Pissarro’s pictures. Close examination reveals ruts and furrows as deep as any in the earth he painted.

The Art Institute also owns a full-scale drawing for the figure and is thus the only museum with both a large-scale preparatory drawing (see cat. 9) and the corresponding painting, which allows for side-by-side study (fig. 10.9 and fig. 10.10).¹⁶ Recent technical analysis has resulted in many new discoveries from which a few conclusions may be drawn. First, there is no evidence that Pissarro attempted to transfer the drawing to the canvas by squaring, pricking, or wetting the sheet (see “Technical Summary” in the technical report). Rather, it seems that he practiced drawing the model before moving on to the painting, getting the general outlines of the figure, the mug, the silver spoon, and the various aspects of the room in which she posed. He may have even used the drawing as a replacement for the model while creating the painting, when he had trouble either convincing her to pose again or raising the money to pay her to do so.

Yet the two works differ sufficiently for us to conclude that the drawing was made at an early stage and that Pissarro departed from it extensively—in the proportions of the figure, in the character of the room in which she sits, in the position of her hands, in the tilt of her head, in the perspective foote of her coffee cup, and in other details, such as the folds of her attire. In the drawing she appears stiff and awkward, and Pissarro seems to have been indecisive regarding her body’s proportions, perhaps altering details from memory. By contrast, in the painting it all comes off as natural, as if the viewer is in the same room, sharing a cup of morning coffee with the woman. Whereas the drawing represents what seems clearly to be the interior of a room in Pissarro’s own house, with a stand for portfolios shown to the left of the woman, the final painting omits all the particulars of the interior and focuses on the contrast between her and the window on the left side of the composition. In the painting Pissarro does add a chair so that the figure appears supported more than she does in the drawing, but it is so generic that all we can conclude about it is that it was made of unpainted wood and is very simple in design.

We do know that the Pissarro family moved in the summer of 1881, and it is certainly possible that the painting was begun in one house and completed in another.¹⁷ Thus, the model may have posed for more than just the drawing, yet she has never been identified. She is not Madame Pissarro or her niece “Nini” Astruc, a frequent model in 1881–83. She may be a housemaid, as Pissarro often resorted to using them as models—as, for example, in *Woman Mending* (1895; cat. 15). It is also possible that the heavier woman who sat for the drawing is not the same model as the one who sat for the painting, indicating that Pissarro likely had to accustom himself to making changes and possibly even relying on his memory when painting his figures.

Richard R. Brettell



fig. 10.9 Detail of the trees in Pissarro’s *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee* (1881) showing a wide variety of colors in a small area. The Art Institute of Chicago, 1922.433.

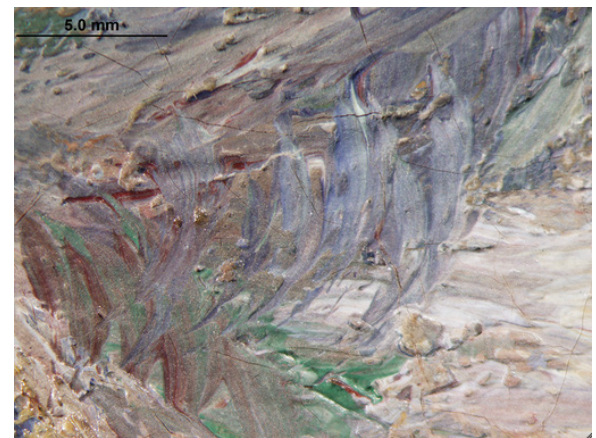


fig. 10.10 Photomicrograph of the eye in Pissarro’s *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee* (1881). The Art Institute of Chicago, 1922.433.

Notes

¹
Young Peasant Having Her Coffee (PV 549; PDRS 662) corresponds to the Pissarro catalogues raisonnés: PV, vol. 1, p. 158, no. 549; vol. 2, pl. 114, no. 549; and PDRS, vol. 2, p. 442, cat. 662 (ill.). The Art Institute currently uses a title that is based on the title that was given to the painting when it was exhibited at the seventh Impressionist exhibition. The painting had the following titles during the lifetime of the artist:

Mar. 1, 1882: *Jeune paysanne prenant son café* (*Catalogue de la 7^{me} exposition des artistes indépendants*, exh. cat. [Morris Père et Fils, 1882], cat. 111.)

Apr. 20, 1883: *Paysanne prenant son Café*. (Dowdeswell and Dowdeswell/Société des Impressionnistes, *Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings and Pastels by Members of "La société des impressionnistes,"* exh. cat. [Dowdeswell and Dowdeswell, 1883], p. 7, cat. 5.)

Apr. 17, 1891: *The Breakfast, Young Peasant Girl Having Café au Lait* (According to Claire Durand-Ruel Snollaerts, "A Painter and His Dealer: Camille Pissarro [1830–1903]," in PDRS, vol. 2, p. 29.)

Jan. 23, 1892: *La Café au lait* (Galleries Durand-Ruel, *Exposition Camille Pissarro*, exh. cat. [E. Ménard et Cie, 1892], p. 23, cat 16.)

²
 For a reproduction of the manuscript for the 1882 Impressionist catalogue, see Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 377. The Art Institute also owns a pencil study for this work, entitled *Young Peasant Having Her Coffee* (1879/80; cat. 9).

³
 For the caricature in *Le Charivari*, see Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 417. For Caillebotte's, Pissarro's, and Renoir's works included in *Le Charivari's satire*, see Berson, *The New Painting*, vol. 2, *Exhibited Works*, pp. 215, 226, 229, 231. Pissarro's painting identified as *Café au lait* is in the middle of the satirical page, on the right side, flanked by one of Monet's *Glaïeuls* and Renoir's *Young Girl Dozing*. For Monet's two *Glaïeuls* paintings and the Renoir works satirized, see Berson, *The New Painting*, vol. 2, *Exhibited Works*, pp. 222, 229, 231.

⁴
 These included the anonymous review in *L'art moderne*, Paul de Chary's review in *Beaux arts*, Émile Hennequin's review in *La revue littéraire et artistique*, A. Hustin's review in *L'estafette*, the same author's later review in *Moniteur des arts*, Armand Sallanches in *Le journal des arts*, and Armand Silvestre in *La vie moderne*. For these reviews, see Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), pp. 380, 384, 393, 395, 396, 412, 413. These reviews, transcribed by Berson in French, are a great source of information on the reception of Impressionist works during their eight shows.

⁵
 "Voici M. Pissarro qui se lasse de n'être qu'un paysagiste et qui entreprend de faire concurrence aux paysans de Millet. Sans doute il nous fait songer à ces paysans; mais quel profit en tire-t-il, sinon d'être écrasé par le souvenir?" Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 381; translation by Elpida Vouitsis, PhD candidate, University of Texas, Dallas. Bigot's review is dated March 4, 1882.

⁶
 "Il faut adresser le même reproche à M. Pissarro, qui est peut-être avec M. Vignon, celui de ces artistes qui a le plus de qualités, mais qui les gâte par une exécution 'abracadabrante.' M. Pissarro a inventé ce qu'on pourrait appeler la peinture en relief. Ses toiles ont l'air de cartes de géographie, avec des montagnes et des vallées. Pourtant ses compositions campagnardes ont un grand charme de naïveté, et, si l'auteur consentait à quitter sa manière de faire, il se trouverait de suite occuper la place qu'il mérite." Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 383; translation by Elpida Vouitsis, PhD candidate, University of Texas, Dallas. André's review is dated March 7, 1882.

⁷
 "Un artiste qui a réellement un grand talent comme dessinateur est M. Pissarro. Les poses de ses individus sont bien naturelles et vivantes; on sent le mouvement et la vie sous toutes ces femmes de la halle, vêtues de couleurs voyantes, et fondues ensemble dans la large buée poussiéreuse que projette un rayon de soleil." Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 384; translation by Elpida Vouitsis, PhD candidate, University of Texas, Dallas. De Charry's review is dated March 14, 1882.

⁸
 "Mais de toutes ces erreurs, la plus singulière est celle de M. Pissarro. À force d'avoir étudié les blouses et les tabliers gros bleu des campagnards, ce dernier en est venu à apercevoir cette nuance atone partout. Ses arbres, ses prés, ses palissades, sa terre, sont peints avec ce même reflet dur, qui décolore jusqu'aux joues de ses femmes. Par contre, les attitudes de ses paysans et de ses paysannes, leur manière de se courber, de s'asseoir, de se porter, sont saisies et rendues avec une exactitude, une vérité frappante." Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 393; translation by Elpida Vouitsis, PhD candidate, University of Texas, Dallas. Hennequin's review is dated March 11, 1882.

⁹
 "En sus de ses paysages de Seine-et-Oise, M. Pissarro exhibe toute une série de paysans et de paysannes et voilà que ce peintre se montre encore à nous sous un nouvel aspect! Comme je l'ai déjà écrit, je crois, la figure humaine revêtait souvent, dans son oeuvre, une allure biblique,—maintenant plus,—M. Pissarro s'est entièrement dégagé des souvenirs de Millet; il peint ses campagnards, sans fausse grandeur, simplement, tels qu'il les voit. Ses délicieuses fillettes en bas rouges, sa vieille femme en marmotte, ses bergères et ses laveuses, ses paysannes déjeunant ou faisant de l'herbe, sont de véritables petits chefs-d'oeuvre." Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 397; translation by Elpida Vouitsis, PhD candidate, University of Texas, Dallas. Huysmans's review of the Impressionist exhibition in 1882 is actually an appendix included at the very end of his 1883 publication *L'art moderne* (Librairie Plon), pp. 283–301. The *marmotte* Huysmans mentions is a type of headgear typically worn by peasants or women working in the fields, and commonly referred to as a headscarf. Huysmans's description must refer to Pissarro's large portrait *La mère Larchevêque* (PDRS 640). Several of Pissarro's peasant women from his figure paintings between 1880 and 1883 are portrayed wearing *marmottes*, namely PDRS 620, 646, 658, 671, 687, 689, and 690, to name just a few. For other nineteenth-century uses of the term *marmotte*, see Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet: Oeuvre posthume* (Alphonse Lemerre, 1881), p. 31; and Émile Zola, *Le ventre de Paris* (Charpentier, 1873), pp. 137, 219.

¹⁰
 "M. Pissarro se distingue de ses confrères par des qualités très personnelles. Nul ne possède mieux que lui le sentiment du calme champêtre et de la poésie des bois. . . . Les Paysannes de M. Pissarro sont des morceaux de peinture exécutés avec un conscience absolue. Ce sont là les gens de nos bois et de nos champs. Ils vivent par l'expression, par l'attitude, par la couleur." Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 410. Robert's review is dated March 5, 1882. "Les peintures de M. Pissarro ressemblent énormément à des pastels. Cet artiste recherche de préférence des sujets à la J.-F. Millet, moins la couleur. . . . Il y a quelque chose aussi dans sa 'Jeune paysanne prenant son café', et son paysage, 'Soleil couchant à Pontoise' est tout simplement étonnant." Quoted in Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews*, p. 412; translation by Elpida Vouitsis, PhD candidate, University of Texas, Dallas. Sallanches's review is dated March 3, 1882. The work called *Sun Setting over Pontoise* has not been identified; see Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 2, *Exhibited Works*, p. 208.

11

“Si l’influence de Corot est manifeste dans l’oeuvre de M. Monet, celle de Millet ne l’est pas moins dans l’oeuvre de M. Pissarro. Et ceci n’est nullement une critique. Quoi qu’on fasse on est toujours le fils de quelqu’un. Et puis, il n’y a pas là paternité, mais simplement parenté d’âme, parenté lointaine d’ailleurs. C’est une gloire déjà, en somme, que de rappeler de grands modèles. J’aime beaucoup les grandes figures de M. Pissarro, imprégnées qu’elles sont d’un charme rustique bien autrement vrai que celui des paysannes de M. Bastien Lepage. Je citerai avec une admiration absolue, la Laveuse, la Jeune paysanne prenant son café, la Jeune paysanne au chapeau, et les deux grandes études portant les numéros 103 et 104. C’est, dans tous ces portraits, la même sincérité d’aspect, la même vérité d’attitude, la même résignation ouvrière. M. Pissarro lui aussi est un poète, non pas virgilien comme Corot, mais sombre, humain aux misères des petits, plein de ce sentiment qui inspira à Pierre Dupont un volume d’idylles vraiment trop peu connu. L’exécution de tout cela est sobre, puissante et pleine d’intérêt.” Quoted in Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1996), p. 413; translation by Elpida Vouitsis, PhD candidate, University of Texas, Dallas. Silvestre’s review is dated March 11, 1882. Pierre Dupont was a French songwriter and poet born into a working-class family and affiliated in his twenties with the writers Gérard de Nerval, Théophile Gautier, and Charles Baudelaire, as well as Charles Gounod, the composer most famous for his “Ave Maria.” Together, Dupont and Gounod composed the song “Les Boeufs,” which made Dupont famous. Dupont was a staunch Republican, and in 1846 composed “The Workers’ Song.” In 1849, he lobbied against President (later Emperor) Napoleon III. On December 2, 1849 Dupont participated in the faubourg Saint-Antoine barricade, which—along with the publication of his compilation *The Peasants’ Song* in the same year—prompted his seven-year exile as a purported threat to Napoleon III.

12

“On me signale un article de Burty d’une glace polaire, il m’a fait des compliments étant à l’exposition avec Degas, politesse sans doute, du reste quelle peut être l’opinion d’un écrivain qui a tant de tendresse pour les hommes officiels, ils me jettent Millet à la tête, mais Millet était biblique! Pour un hébreu il me semble l’être peu, c’est curieux!” Pissarro to Duret, Pontoise, March 12, 1882, published in Janine Bailly-Herzberg, ed., *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*, vol. 1, 1865–1885 (Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), p. 158. Pissarro’s letter is referring to Burty’s review dated March 8, 1882. Bailly-Herzberg’s footnote to Pissarro’s letter to Duret on March 12, 1882 suggests that he had likely not yet read Burty’s review penned a few days earlier, and that it only reached him by word of mouth, by someone obviously misinformed or exaggerating the critic’s comments. My thanks to Joachim Pissarro for his help with the translation of this passage.

13

Camille to Lucien Pissarro, Osny par Pontoise, June 13, 1882, and January 21, 1884, published in Janine Bailly-Herzberg, ed., *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*, vol. 1, 1865–1885 (Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), pp. 218–19, 276. In the 1884 letter Pissarro reminds his son that works by Bastien-Lepage should not be considered art.

14

For André’s review, see Ruth Berson, *The New Painting: Impressionism, 1874–1886*, vol. 1, *Reviews* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco/University of Washington, Press, 1996), p. 383. André’s review is dated March 7, 1882.

15

Labarrière’s review is translated in PDRS, vol. 1, p. 180. For details about Pissarro’s solo show in May 1883 and Labarrière’s comments of the same year, see *Woman and Child at the Well* (1882; cat. 11).

16

There exist several other drawings for large-scale figure paintings from 1880 and 1881, but they have never before been shown with their corresponding paintings, making it impossible to know precisely their role in the artist’s preparatory process.

17

Although identifying the scene seen through the window may locate the original inspiration for this work, Pissarro’s technique of juxtaposing separate color strokes to create an effect from a distance makes this task extremely difficult. It may very well be that the colors Pissarro recorded are the effect of particular light conditions and not literally those of a particular type of tree and its foliage.