



Landscape with washerwomen,
attributed to Alessandro Magnasco

**Conservation and Art Historical Analysis:
A Collaborative Research Investigation**

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Courtauld Institute of Art

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Introduction

The Courtauld Gallery's painting *Landscape with washerwomen* (Fig. 1) entered the collection in 1978, when it was one of 138 paintings bequeathed as the Princes Gate Collection by Count Seilern.¹

The painting's title and attribution were first published in the 1969 *Addenda* to Seilern's seven-part catalogue of his collection, which attributes the painting to the Genoese painter Alessandro Magnasco [1667-1749], also known as Lissandrino, who was active in Milan, Venice, Florence and Genoa in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.² The painting had previously been attributed to Magnasco's contemporary, collaborator and friend, the Veneto-born painter Marco Ricci, [1676-1730]. However, Seilern argued that the painting was 'in my opinion more probably by Magnasco', as the subject, of washerwomen at work in a wild landscape was a 'favourite of his', and 'several closely similar landscapes' by this artist 'confirmed the attribution'.³ Washerwomen, monks and hermits are indeed frequent inhabitants of Magnasco's wild, phantasmagoric landscapes, and the new title Seilern gave to the painting compliments his observations and his attribution: *Landscape with Washerwomen* was previously listed with the title 'Rocky River Landscape with Figures' in the catalogue of Sir W.W. Burrell's sale in June 1897.⁴

In the forty years since Seilern's catalogue, a reassessment of Magnasco's work and methods has been underway in Italy, recently culminating in the joint exhibition at the Musei di Strada Nuova in Genoa and Galerie Canesso in Paris.⁵ However despite recent developments in art historical scholarship on Magnasco and his contemporaries, technical studies of this group's works remain rare, numbering only two at the time of this investigation. The selection of *Landscape with Washerwomen* as a subject for the Courtauld Institute Sackler Research Forum's 2015-16 Conservation and Art Historical Analysis project is therefore timely.

¹ 'Landscape with Washerwomen', <http://www.artandarchitecture.org.uk/images/gallery/5e64208b.html> [accessed 18 December 2015]; *The Princes Gate Collection* (London: Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1981).

² Antoine Seilern, *Flemish Paintings & Drawings at 56 Princes Gate, London SW7*, 2 volumes. (London: Shenvall Press, 1955); Antoine Seilern, *Italian Paintings & Drawings at 56 Princes Gate, London SW7*, 2 volumes. (London: Shenvall Press, 1959); Antoine Seilern, *Paintings and Drawings of Continental Schools Other than Flemish and Italian at 56 Princes Gate, London SW7*, 2 volumes. (London: Shenvall Press, 1961); Antoine Seilern, *Flemish Paintings & Drawings at 56 Princes Gate, London SW7: Addenda*. (London: Shenvall Press, 1969); Antoine Seilern, *Italian Paintings & Drawings at 56 Princes Gate, London SW7: Addenda*, 2 volumes. (London: Shenvall Press, 1969); Antoine Seilern, *Recent Acquisitions at 56 Princes Gate, London SW7*, 2 volumes. (London: Shenvall Press, 1971); Antoine Seilern, *Corrigenda & addenda to the catalogue of Paintings & Drawings at 56 Princes Gate, London SW7*. London: (Shenvall Press, 1971).

³ Seilern 1969, 25.

⁴ *Catalogue of the Collection of Ancient and Modern Pictures of Sir W.W. Burrell, Bart. Deceased (Sold by Direction of R.M. Burrell, Esq.) which will be sold by auction by Messrs. Christie, Manson & Woods at their great rooms, 8 King Street, St. James's Square, on Saturday, June 12, 1897, at one o'clock precisely* (London: Christies, 1897).

⁵ Fausta Franchini Guelfi and Véronique Damian, *Alessandro Magnasco (1667-1749): gli anni della maturità di un pittore anticonformista* (Paris: Galerie Canesso, 2015).



Figure 1: *Landscape with Washerwomen*, attr. Alessandro Magnasco, c.1711-35. Oil on canvas, 71.2x98cm. Courtauld Gallery, P.1978.PG.230. Before treatment.

This interdisciplinary collaboration between a conservator and an art historian sought to investigate *Landscape with Washerwomen* through technical and art historical study, to understand better the painting's place in its art-historical context and its subsequent history. Close comparison of the style, composition, materials and techniques found in *Landscape with Washerwomen* with those in other works attributed to Magnasco, was central to this investigation. As the project developed, these comparisons were extended to works attributed to Magnasco's collaborators, contemporaries and imitators. Technical analysis of the painting, which investigated grounds, pigments, canvas type and dimensions, was complemented by the treatment of the painting, which provided further careful analysis of details and techniques in our comparative studies. These comparative studies were informed by critical analysis of written sources, both primary and secondary. Throughout the project we sought to remain conscious of the important role that reception, rediscovery and historiography continue to play in contemporary connoisseurship and ongoing research.

Alessandro Magnasco, his circle and their critical fortunes

Alessandro Magnasco was born in 1667 in Genoa.⁶ After the death of his father, the painter Stefano Magnasco [c.1635-c.1672], he travelled to Milan and continued his training with the Venetian painter Filippo Abbiati [1640-1715]. After working as a portraitist in the 1690s he established his reputation as a painter of scenes from contemporary life and as a painter of lively, expressive figures. Surviving letters and inventories record how Magnasco collaborated with numerous artists, adding his characteristic figures to landscapes by artists such as the landscapist Antonio Francesco Peruzzini [1643/6-1724], the painter of classical ruins Clemente Spera [c.1662-1742], Sebastiano Ricci [1659-1734] and Ricci's aforementioned nephew, Marco Ricci. It is likely that Magnasco also collaborated with more artists, assistants and students, whose names are yet to be rediscovered.⁷ The popularity of Magnasco's works during his lifetime is attested by his clientele, who included prominent aristocratic families of Milan, such as Giovanni Francesco Arese, who owned at least twenty-two of Magnasco's paintings, and the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici in Florence, where Magnasco is documented working with Peruzzini from 1703 until 1709.⁸ Magnasco worked for most of his life in Milan, only returning to Genoa around 1735, where, according to his biographer Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, the artist's work was less well received. The difference between the first surviving draft of Ratti's 'Life' of the artist, written during the artist's lifetime, and the less detailed version included in his *Lives of the Genoese Painters, Sculptors and Architects* published in 1769, suggests that Magnasco's reputation began to wane soon after his death in 1749.⁹ During the nineteenth century, his work was largely forgotten. Though Ratti mentions Magnasco's collaborations in his 'Life' of the artist, his text remains essentially monographic in emphasis, and this has coloured the historiography and critical fortunes of this group of artists.

Until recently, Magnasco was not only presented as the primary but often the sole author of his collaborations with other painters. In 1914 the Austrian art historian Benno Geiger's monograph on Magnasco fuelled a new revival of interest in the artist.¹⁰ This rediscovery characterised Magnasco's landscapes as gothic and phantasmagorical, and

⁶ For biographies of Magnasco, see Franchini Guelfi, *Alessandro Magnasco* (Genova: Cassa di Risparmio, 1977); Franchini Guelfi and Paolo Bensi, *Alessandro Magnasco* (Italy: Edizioni dei Soncino, 1991); Laura Muti, Daniele De Sarno Prignano and Egidio Martini, *Alessandro Magnasco* (Italy: Faenza, 1994); Ettore Camesasca, and Castellotti M. Bona, *Alessandro Magnasco: 1667-1749* (Milan: Electa, 1996).

⁷ For ease this group of named and unnamed artists will hitherto be referred to as Magnasco's circle.

⁸ Muti, De Sarno Prignano and Martini 1994, 21-40.

⁹ Carlo Giuseppe Ratti and Raffaello Soprani, *Vite de Pittori, Scultori ed Architetti Genovesi; In questa seconda Edizione rivedute, accresciute ed arricchite di note da Carlo Giuseppe Ratti* (Genoa: Stamperia Casamara, 1769), 155-164. The two drafts of Ratti's text are published as appendices in Camesasca and Bona, 1996.

¹⁰ Benno Geiger, *Alessandro Magnasco* (Berlin: P. Cassirer, 1914). Benno Geiger [1882-1965] was also a translator, an art dealer and a collector of Old Master drawings, including a number of drawings he attributed to Magnasco. He continued to work on Magnasco throughout his life, publishing Carlo Giuseppe Ratti's *Life* of the artist in 1923, and organising the first monographic exhibition of his work in 1949. See Geiger and Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, *Alessandro Magnasco* (Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1923); Geiger, *I Disegni Del Magnasco* (1945); Geiger, *Alessandro Magnasco* (Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1949).

considered Magnasco's figures of monks, hermits, Jesuits and Quakers to be expressive, cruel, even satirical. Magnasco's work was included in the important exhibition of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century painting at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence in 1922, and in 1924 Sir Sacheverell Sitwell founded a Magnasco Society in Britain, to 'further the study and appreciation of what, for the lack of a more precise term, we may call Baroque Painting,' with Magnasco's name given prominence because of the span of his work across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ The Magnasco Society's annual exhibitions helped to raise the profile of the artist in Britain, and by the time of the Royal Academy's unprecedented *Italian Art* exhibition in 1930, Magnasco's last known work *Trattenimento in un giardino d'Albaro* (see below, Fig. 17) was included alongside works of Giovanni Battista Tiepolo [1696-1770], Francesco Guardi [1712-1793] and Giovanni Antonio Canal, better known as Canaletto [1697-1768], in the eighteenth-century room.¹² When Count Seilern acquired *Landscape with Washerwomen*, the painting was similarly positioned amongst the twelve Tiepolos in his collection.¹³ Geiger organised the first monographic exhibition of the artist in Bergamo in 1949 and as Magnasco's work continued to become more familiar and more popular throughout the twentieth century, many paintings attributed to artists better known to connoisseurs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, like Salvator Rosa [1615-1673], Sebastiano and Marco Ricci, became recognised as works by the newly-rediscovered Magnasco. *Landscape with Washerwomen* bears this historiography as part of its physical history: 'Marco Ricci died 17...' was inscribed on the reverse of the original canvas at an unknown date, though this is now only visible with X-ray due to a later lining (Fig. 2).¹⁴

Count Seilern's recognition of *Landscape with Washerwomen*, and his reattribution of the painting from Marco Ricci to Alessandro Magnasco is not unique among the group of works now or once attributed to Magnasco in British collections. Marco Ricci made several visits to England, the first in 1708 and the second in the company of his uncle Sebastiano Ricci in 1711.¹⁵ The former's small idealised landscapes, like the thirty-two paintings on leather in the Royal Collection, were well known in Britain, where his work also circulated in print thanks to Davide Fossati's engravings of twenty-four Ricci landscapes.¹⁶ It is therefore

¹¹ *Mostra della pittura italiana del Seicento e del Settecento* (Rome: Bestetti & Tumminelli, 1922); *The Magnasco Society. Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Italian Pictures of the XVII. & XVIII Centuries*. (London: Thos. Agnew & Sons, 1924), 5.

¹² Robert Witt, 'Introduction', in W.G. Constable, Robert Clermont Witt, Adolfo Venturi and Ugo Ojetti, *Exhibition of Italian Art 1200-1900* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1930), xiv.

¹³ See Seilern 1955, Seilern 1959, Seilern 1961, Seilern 1969, Seilern 1971 and *The Princes Gate Collection* (London: Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1981).

¹⁴ The inscription on the back of the original canvas reads 'Marco Ricci died 17...' Though invisible to the naked eye since the canvas was lined at an unknown date, it is visible with X-Ray. Marco Ricci died in 1730.

¹⁵ For a full biography of Marco Ricci see Giuseppe Maria Pilo, Rodolfo Pallucchini, *Marco Ricci* (Venice: Alfieri, 1963); Annalisa Scarpa Sonino, *Marco Ricci* (Milan: Berenice, 1991); Dario Succi, Annalia Deneri, Bernard Aikema, Bram de Koerck and Isabella Reale, *Marco Ricci e il paesaggio Veneto del Settecento* (Milan: Electa, 1993).

¹⁶ Michael Levey, *Painting in Eighteenth-century Venice* (Yale University Press, 1959, 3rd edn 1994), 78-79.



a. Reverse view of *Landscape with Washerwomen*.



b. Detail of X-Ray.



c. Detail of X-Ray reversed.

Figure 2: Reverse of canvas and X-ray details.

unsurprising that the names of Marco and Sebastiano Ricci were better known in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain than those of other artists working in Magnasco's circle.

In the decades since Seilern's reassessment of *Landscape with Washerwomen*, however, scholars have been exploring the documented collaborations within Magnasco's circle. In 1959 Arslan's rediscovery of Magnasco's most frequent collaborator, the aforementioned landscape artist Antonio Francesco Peruzzini, marked the beginning of a new interest in Magnasco's collaborative working methods, and a new interrogation of the traditional catalogue raisonné.¹⁷ The archival evidence discovered in the last fifty years not only confirms that Magnasco collaborated with numerous artists, including Marco and Sebastiano Ricci, Clemente Spera and Cosimo Tura as well as Peruzzini, but several of these contemporary inventories provide crucial evidence for understanding the contemporary value placed on artists' collaboration.

An inventory of the paintings of Milanese patron Giovanni Francesco Arese lists two landscapes by Magnasco and Peruzzini together, describing Peruzzini's landscapes as 'sweeping' and 'lively' or 'spirited', within which Magnasco's figures are distributed 'charmingly'. The writer reserves the most praise for the paintings' 'universal harmony of colours', which exemplify the seamless collaboration of the work of these two artists working together.¹⁸ The posthumous inventory of another patron, Giuseppe Peroni, goes further, attributing a painting to 'the hand of [Peruzzini] and Magnasco', phrasing which suggests the two artists' collaboration was seen as so seamless they could be described as sharing one hand.¹⁹ The monographic emphasis in Magnasco historiography, which originated in Ratti's Vasarian 'Life' structure, has in the most recent decades been unravelled to reveal a more complex picture of the collaborative working methods of this group of artists.²⁰ Pietro Zampetti recently suggested that scholars working on Magnasco and his circle are now confronted by a new genre: the work of four or more hands working together.²¹

Zampetti's views are not, however, universally shared by all current scholars of Magnasco. Peruzzini and Magnasco are documented working together in Tuscany in the first years of the eighteenth century, and it is agreed that both artists returned to live in the same

¹⁷ Edoardo Arslan, 'Contributo a Sebastiano Ricci e ad Antonio Francesco Peruzzini', in *Studies in the History of Art dedicated to William E. Suida on his Eighties Birthday* (London: Phaidon Press, 1959), 304-311. For recent scholarship on Peruzzini, see Mina Gregori and Pietro Zampetti, *Antonio Francesco Peruzzini* (Milan: Electa, 1997) and Muti and De Sarno Prignano, *Antonio Francesco Peruzzini* (Faenza, Monfalcone: Edizione della Laguna, 1996).

¹⁸ '2 Tele per traverso con vasto e spiritoso Paese e caseggiato in distanza in cui sono leggiadramente distribuite le figurine del Magnasco; [...] il tutto eseguito con armonia universale di tinte'. 1718 posthumous inventory of Giovan Francesco Arese, first published in F. Arese, 'Una quadreria milanese della fine del Seicento', *Arte Lombarda* XII (1967), 141; reprinted in Muti and De Sarno Prignano 1996, 133-134.

¹⁹ 'un quadro di braccia sei altezza e larghezza rapresentante una processione di capuccini ed altri religiosi, di mano delli pittori Perugino ed Alessandrino'. 8 June 1723 posthumous inventory of Giuseppe Peroni. Archivio di Stato, Milan, Notarile, Giulio Cesare Panigati, file 40324. Published in Muti and De Sarno Prignano 1996, 134.

²⁰ Ratti and Soprani 1769, 155-164.

²¹ Gregori and Zampetti, 1997, 32-33.

area of Milan in 1712-13. Scholars are then divided on whether the artists continued to collaborate until Peruzzini's death in 1724, or whether they parted ways. This calls into question the attribution of a group of paintings which Fausta Franchini Guelfi gives to Magnasco working alone, but Mina Gregori, Pietro Zampetti, Laura Muti, and Daniele De Sarno consider to be a continuation of the artists' collaboration. The latter group of scholars believe that Peruzzini's 'late style', an evolution of his earlier work, is apparent in his landscapes from this period, which this group of scholars hold in high esteem. They argue that his rapidly applied 'loose' and 'frothy' brushstrokes and the increasingly open leaves in his 'late work' were a crucial catalyst for widespread changes in the landscape genre at the beginning of eighteenth century, Zampetti going as far as to compare Peruzzini's innovations to Guardi's late work, suggesting that his innovations are even akin to those made by the French Impressionists in the next century.

The lack of consensus regarding this contested group of late paintings necessarily complicates any investigation of works attributed to this circle of artists. The previous monographic emphasis in Magnasco historiography, which affected the attribution of his paintings, has now been unravelled to reveal a more complex picture of this group's working methods. In the extant examples of landscape paintings with added figures attributed to this circle of artists, some of which survive as pendant pairs, it is now understood that two or more artists would collaborate to benefit from their differing specialisms, as landscape painters or as figure painters. The popularity of the work of these artists, exemplified by Magnasco's characteristic figures, seems to have established a market for such paintings, with named and unnamed collaborators, students and contemporary imitators mimicking the artist's expressive, elongated figures and the wild landscapes in which they roam.

Investigating *Landscape with Washerwomen*

The unbroken provenance of *Landscape with Washerwomen*, from its first documentation in the 1897 Burrell sale until its purchase by Count Seilern in 1961, is strong evidence that the painting was unlikely to have been created in response to Magnasco's twentieth-century revival, dating from Geiger's 1914 monograph. Given the popularity of Magnasco's work during his lifetime however, it seemed possible that *Landscape with washerwomen* could have been made by an imitator or imitators working in the style of Magnasco.

In January 2016, leading Magnasco scholar Fausta Franchini Guelfi suggested an alternative hypothesis to Count Seilern's prevailing attribution of *Landscape with Washerwomen*, suggesting after an examination of photographs that the painting was not by Magnasco, but the work of two or more artists in his circle, who had worked on the figures and the landscape separately.²² Franchini Guelfi's opinion, which corroborated the complex historiography and ongoing scholarship on Magnasco, his regular collaborators and their wider circle, prompted our choice of research questions as encompassing a number of possibilities. Is this painting technically consistent with works of the early eighteenth century, specifically, with works by artists working in Magnasco's circle? If our painting is not the work of Magnasco, or at least not of Magnasco working alone, is it possible to identify the hand or hands involved in our painting in other contemporary works?

To explore these research questions, we undertook to investigate the painting's physical characteristics, and identified two paintings which we believed exhibited convincing similarities with *Landscape with Washerwomen*. As we considered the likelihood that all three paintings under investigation were the result of the collaborative working methods used by Magnasco and his associates, we intended to use a combination of stylistic analysis and technical examination to get closer to understanding the distribution of this work.

²² Private correspondence between Donatella Banti and Fausta Franchini Guelfi, January 2016.

I. Visual analysis

The comparative analysis at the heart of our investigation considered *Landscape with washerwomen* alongside two paintings identified for their striking stylistic, compositional and technical resemblance to the physical characteristics of the Courtauld Gallery's painting. The first of these, the Ashmolean Museum's *Landscape with figures and a waterfall*, (Fig. 3) has recently been reattributed from Magnasco to his collaborator Antonio Francesco Peruzzini [1643/6-1724].²³ The second, *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac* (Fig. 4), attributed to Alessandro Magnasco, was purchased by the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon in 1956. It is worth noting that while the Courtauld and Lyon paintings have very similar dimensions, measuring 98 x 71 cm and 98 x 75 cm respectively, the Ashmolean *Landscape* is significantly larger, almost twice the size of the others at 163 x 137 cm.

It should also be emphasised that this comparison necessarily considers three objects which have had a different physical history and are in differing states of conservation. Though the Courtauld *Landscape*'s obscuring varnish was removed during treatment, the Ashmolean *Landscape* is still covered by layers of dark and degraded varnish. The Lyon *Paysage* had also been subjected to different treatments that have slightly altered its original appearance.²⁴

Nevertheless, the state of preservation of all three paintings allowed us to compare the composition of the landscapes, details in the sky, details of the trees and foliage, and the small figures set in the landscape. Figures and landscape have been considered separately, in keeping with what is known of the collaborative working techniques practised in Magnasco and Peruzzini's circle, thus allowing for the possibility that figures and landscape may be the work of different hands.

All three paintings depict a landscape in portrait format with a high horizon line above the vertical midpoint. Trees or woodland frame the composition on either side of a central clearing, in which a stream, waterfall or lake is represented. Each clearing is populated by small figures representing washerwomen, fishermen and vagabonds, whose relative sizes give an impression of the depth of the composition. In all three paintings, mountainous or rocky planes in the distance are rendered by diagonal silvery streaks of a pale yellow or white pigment. The skies are heavy with clouds, richly modelled over a thinly applied layer of blue paint. In all three works, particularly in the Courtauld and Ashmolean paintings, the red preparatory layer is left visible to convey a specific tonality and feeling. In the foliage background in the lower two-thirds of both the Courtauld and the Ashmolean paintings, this red functions as a mid-tone.

²³ '*Landscape with Figures and a Waterfall*, attributed to Antonio Francesco Peruzzini (WA1945.99)', in Colin Harrison, Catherine Casley and Jon Whiteley, *The Ashmolean Museum: complete illustrated catalogue of paintings* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2004), 165.

²⁴ Gerard Bruyere of the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, private communication, February 2016.

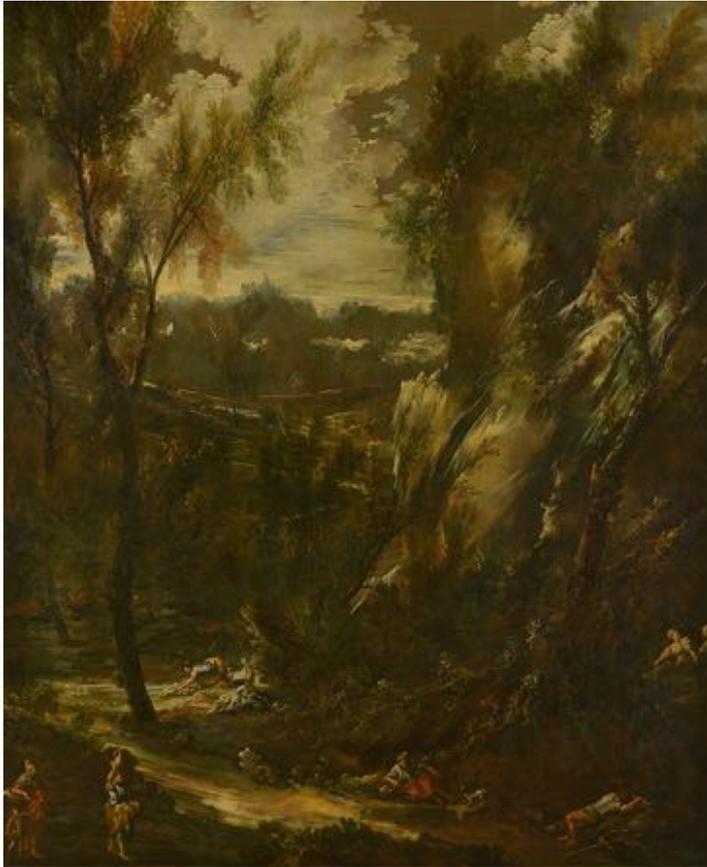


Figure 3: Antonio Francesco Peruzzini and workshop, *Landscape with a Waterfall*. Oil on canvas, 163x137cm. Ashmolean Museum.



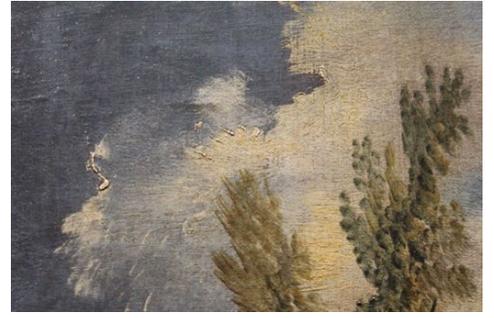
Figure 4: Alessandro Magnasco, *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac*. Oil on canvas, 98 x 75 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon.



a. Detail from the Courtauld *Landscape with Washerwomen*



b. Detail from the Ashmolean *Landscape with figures and a waterfall*



c. Detail from Lyon *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac*

Figure 5: Details showing cloud modelling.

Details of the Courtauld *Landscape*'s sky show that the clouds are rendered using visible brushstrokes made with a 7-10 mm wide brush to model highlights of pure lead white and other cream-like colours (Fig. 5). Smaller clouds are simply rendered by adding quick brushstrokes in a characteristic zig-zag motion (Fig. 6a); we refer to these brushstrokes as 'squiggles', as this word gives a very good idea of their appearance. Similar 'squiggles', that is to say, brushstrokes rendered with similar rapidity and zig-zag motion, are also found in the skies of the Lyon *Paysage* and Ashmolean *Landscape* (Fig. 6b&c).



a. Detail from the Courtauld *Landscape with Washerwomen*



b. Detail from the Ashmolean *Landscape with figures and a waterfall*



c. Detail from Lyon *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac*

Figure 6: Details showing 'squiggles'.

Microscopic analysis of the clouds in the Courtauld *Landscape* revealed that these clouds have been built up using layers of various hues of blue, white and cream, in some cases painted wet on wet, like the majority of the rest of the painting (Fig. 7).



Figure 7: Detail of wet on wet brushstrokes in the sky.

This does not seem to be dissimilar to the construction of the sky in Magnasco's *Trattenimento in un giardino d'Albaro*, as revealed by Professor Bensi's technical study of this painting (see discussion below, and Figs. 17-18). The layered structure of the clouds gives them their rich and creamy body. Though microscopic analysis of similar details in the *Lyon Paysage* and *Ashmolean Landscape* was not possible, it seems that these paintings also share this characteristic technique.



a. Detail from the Courtauld *Landscape with Washerwomen*



b. Detail from *Lyon Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac*

Figure 8: Details of foliage.

The Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Washerwomen* also exhibits distinctive details in the foliage of the trees and bushes, which have been obtained with decisive dabs using a smaller brush, possibly used dry (Fig 8a). In some parts, areas of *impasto* are also visible in the leaves and branches of the trees (Fig. 9a).

Foliage in the *Lyon Paysage* and *Ashmolean Landscape* seem to have been defined using similar dabs, like in the examples of trees provided in Fig. 8b and Fig. 9b.



a. Detail from the Courtauld *Landscape with Washerwomen*



b. Detail from the *Ashmolean Landscape with figures and a waterfall*

Figure 9: Details of trees.

The close analytical comparison of these details persuasively suggests that the landscapes rendered in the Lyon *Paysage* and the Ashmolean *Landscape* were painted by the same hand (or indeed hands) as that responsible for the landscape in the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Washerwomen*.

As recent scholarship on Magnasco and his circle of collaborators has shown, however, it was customary for artists in this group to share commissions between two or more hands, with different painters responsible for the landscape and for the figures (see above). The small figures in the Courtauld *Landscape* have all been rendered with greater precision than details in the background landscape, often using neat brushstrokes applied using a narrower brush (2.5-3.5 mm wide) than that used in the foliage and clouds (Fig. 10).



a. Detail from the Courtauld *Landscape with Washerwomen*



b. Detail from the Ashmolean *Landscape with figures and a waterfall*



c. Detail from Lyon *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac*

Figure 10: Details of figures.

Highlights are rendered with touches of bright paint, as in the women's dresses in both the Courtauld and the Ashmolean *Landscape*s (Fig. 11), enabling the figures to stand out from the darker brown landscape.



a. Detail from the Courtauld *Landscape with Washerwomen*



b. Detail from the Ashmolean *Landscape with figures and a waterfall*

Figure 11: Details showing highlighting in women's dress

A close comparison between the figures in all three paintings (Fig. 10) suggests that the Courtauld and Ashmolean figures are more similar than those in the Lyon painting. The three paintings all represent one washerwoman as one of the main figures. The technical construction of the dresses and anatomical details of the women in the Courtauld and

Ashmolean *Landscapes* suggest that they were painted by the same hand: the small neat brushstrokes which render the hair, crossed-detailing of blouses, and highlighted muscles of the arms are highly suggestive.

Most persuasively, a comparison of the dog in both the Courtauld and Ashmolean *Landscapes* provides convincing evidence that the figures in these two paintings were constructed by the same hand: the ribbed highlights picking out the fur of the dogs' backs, the jutting right-angle of the legs, even the bouncing curve of the tails, suggest that these two dogs could almost have been drawn from the same living example. (Fig. 12).



a. Detail from the Courtauld *Landscape with Washerwomen*



b. Detail from the Ashmolean *Landscape with figures and a waterfall*

Figure 12: Details showing dogs.

The artist responsible for these figures is characterised by precise, measured brushstrokes and awkwardly-posed figures, undeniably mimicking or referencing the small, obscure figures in Magnasco's collaborations with the landscape artist Peruzzini. Nevertheless the rapid, assured strokes, the elongated limbs and contorted, elegant poses of Magnasco's figures in works like *Paesaggio tempestoso con frati in cammino* (Fig. 13), or *The Magpie Singing Lesson* (Fig. 24), suggests that the figures in the Courtauld's *Landscape with Washerwomen* and the Ashmolean's *Landscape with a Waterfall* are by another hand, an unnamed figure artist working with the landscapist Peruzzini in the style of Magnasco. After examining photographs of the Courtauld *Landscape*, Faustini Guelfi, has affirmed that she recognised the hand responsible for the figures from other paintings she had seen by artists working in Magnasco's wider circle, but that this figure artist has not yet been named.²⁵

The recent reattribution of the Ashmolean Museum's *Landscape with a Waterfall* from Alessandro Magnasco to the known landscapist Antonio Francesco Peruzzini and his workshop, is however very suggestive.²⁶ This reattribution reflects current scholarship on

²⁵ Private correspondence between Donatella Bani and Fausta Franchini Guelfi, January 2016.

²⁶ See Gregori and Zampetti 1997; Muti and De Sano Prignano 1996.

Magnasco, Peruzzini and their contemporaries, which looks closely and critically at these paintings in an attempt to unpick the intrinsically collaborative nature of these artists' work. On the strength of the visual evidence provided by the paintings in their conditions at the time of this comparative study, we would propose a similar reattribution of the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Washerwomen* to Antonio Francesco Peruzzini and collaborator. Similarities between *Landscape with washerwomen* and examples of Peruzzini's 'late work', like *Paesaggio tempestoso con frati in cammino* (1719-1720) (Fig. 13) support this suggestion.



Figure 13: Antonio Francesco Peruzzini and Alessandro Magnasco, *Paesaggio tempestoso con frati in cammino*, 1719-20. Oil on canvas, 235x176cm. Milano, Pinacoteca di Brera.

The visibility of the red bole of the preparatory ground in this work together with an increase in lightness and dissolution of the forms, which Laura Muti and Daniele De Sarno Prignano argue characterises Peruzzini's last decades' work,²⁷ is also found in *Landscape with Washerwomen*. The work's abraded condition should not be discounted in considering the prominence of this visible red bole. Nevertheless, the comparison suggests a tentative dating of the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Washerwoman* to Peruzzini's 'late period', a term used to describe the last decades of Peruzzini's life, 1710-1724.

²⁷ Muti and De Sarno Prignano, 'L'avventura artistica di Antonio Francesco Peruzzini, creatore e artifice della pittura moderna di paesaggio' in Gregori and Zampetti 1997, 29-30.

II. Technical Analysis

Despite the recent re-examination of Magnasco, Peruzzini and their other collaborators in art historical scholarship, technical studies of the work of this circle of artists remain few in number at the time of this project. It is however possible to compare the results of the technical investigation conducted on the Courtauld's painting with what is known of materials and techniques used in Northern Italy in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century and more specifically used by Magnasco, Peruzzini and related groups of artists.

Contemporary observations of Magnasco's technique provide useful information for characterising the artist's distinctive working methods. In 1769 Magnasco's biographer Ratti described his brushstrokes as 'composed of quick, careless, but artful touches, applied with a certain bravura which is difficult to explain, and cannot be imagined by those who have not seen it. He had in those strokes such a brave frankness and such a particular carelessness that sometimes in his painting he left the *imprimatura* uncovered, and in some places, as he needed it, he used this instead of paint. [...] It is also true that Magnasco was not a diligent painter, and paintings that required a more complete and detailed finish did not turn out as perfect as the ones he painted "by touch."²⁸

Ratti's account documents how Magnasco was known for painting on a red *imprimatura*, and for letting this red colour to show through as a mid-tone. Visible red ground is not unique to Magnasco's work; as outlined above, Peruzzini's works also exhibit a visible red ground.²⁹ In the sky and background of *Landscape with Washerwomen*, the paint was applied loosely and thinly, leaving the red ground or *imprimatura* visible, perhaps as a mid-tone to create a specific atmosphere (Fig.14a). However, careful microscopic analysis revealed that the sky shows clear signs of abrasion in some areas (Fig 14b).



a. mid-tone for atmosphere?



b. abrasion

Figure 14: Details showing visible red ground or *imprimatura*.

²⁸ Authors' translation. 'Composte di veloci e sprezzanti, ma artificiosi tocchi, lanciati con una certa bravura che e' difficile a spigarsi, ne' puo' ben immaginarla chi non la vede.. Egli aveva in cio' una franchezza si' prode ed una noncuranza si' particolare, che talvolta lasciava scoperta ne' quadri l'imprimatura, e in alcuni luoghi faceva servire al suo bisogno la tinta di quella..... Vero e' pero che il Magnasco non era pittore di diligenza. Laonde que suoi dipinti, che richiedevano studio di finitezza, non gli riuscivan cosi' perfetti come gli altri di tocco.' Ratti and Soprani 1769, 157.

²⁹ Muti and De Sarno Prignano 1996, 30.

Both the clouds (Fig. 15a) and the sky (Fig. 15b) were dotted in parts with some tiny flecks of overpaint applied in a previous restoration campaign, to cover either areas where the red grounds showed to higher extent (Fig 15b) or where dark varnish was left in the interstices of the paint surface (Fig 15a). These abrasions and additions, together with the possibility of a natural increase in the transparency of the paint over time, have altered the original balance of paint and ground tones. Although some tiny flecks of overpaint are only visible under the microscope, some larger retouchings at the edges of the canvas are visible to the naked eye. Thus we remained aware that what we see today may not only be the results of the artist or artists' technique, but also the results of an alteration over time, due to the natural degradation of the materials used, or the past physical history of the painting.



a. clouds



b. sky

Figure 15: Retouchings.

It is also important to emphasise that prior to treatment *Landscape with Washerwomen* was covered by a layer of yellow, degraded varnish, that obscured details, altered the sense of compositional depth and reduced the colours of the paint to a chromatically dull appearance, lacking colour and life (Fig. 16a). The removal of the varnish layer together with previous campaigns of overpaint, allowed a clearer analysis of details previously lost beneath this layer, thus enabling us to look more carefully at techniques and materials (compare photographs before treatment and after varnish removal, Figure 16). It also produced a dramatic shift in the chromatic tonality of the whole painting revealing the real extent of the prominence of the red ground colour in its actual state.

Professor Paolo Bensi, who has conducted extensive technical studies on Tiepolo and on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ligurian paintings, is responsible for the only technical analysis of a painting by Alessandro Magnasco to date: his technical study of Magnasco's *Trattenimento in un Giardino di Albaro*, now in the collection of the Musei di Strada Nuova in Genoa. (Fig. 17).³⁰

³⁰ Paolo Bensi, 'La Tecnica Pittorica', in Fausta Franchini Guelfi, *Alessandro Magnasco* (Soncino (CR): Edizioni del Soncino, 1991), 117-119; Bensi, 'Note sui materiali costitutivi e sulla tecnica pittorica del "Trattenimento in un giardino d' Albaro" di Alessandro Magnasco' in *Il "Trattenimento in un giardino d'Albaro": un restauro a Palazzo Bianco*, ed. Clario Di Fabio (Genoa, 1990), 25-26, 35.

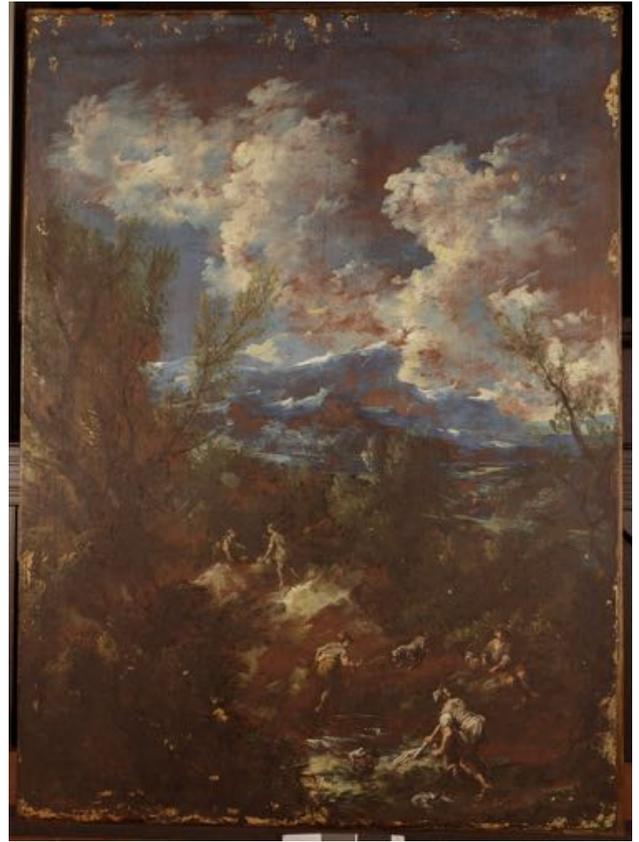


Figure 16: Comparison of *Landscape with Washerwomen* before treatment and after varnish removal.



Figure 17: Alessandro Magnasco, *Trattenimento in un giardino d'Albaro*, 1745-1749. Oil on canvas. Musei di Strada Nuova, Genoa.

Scholars agree that this painting is dated between 1745 and 1749, and it is widely acknowledged as the artist's last known work before his death aged 82 in 1749.³¹ Thus though the *Trattenimento* may not be entirely representative of Magnasco's body of work, it is nevertheless significant as a known example of the artist working alone, without any of his collaborators. In the absence of other technical studies of paintings attributed to Magnasco, or indeed technical studies of paintings by his contemporaries and collaborators working in the region, Bensi's study was of paramount importance as a comparison for our technical analysis of *Landscape with Washerwomen*.

Bensi's technical study of Magnasco's *Trattenimento* confirms what Ratti described. Indeed a cross section from the foliage (Fig. 18b) reveals that Magnasco painted on a red-orange ground of red ochres, minium and oil with a darker red-brown *imprimatura* layer on top of ochres, lead white, bitumen and carbon black.³²

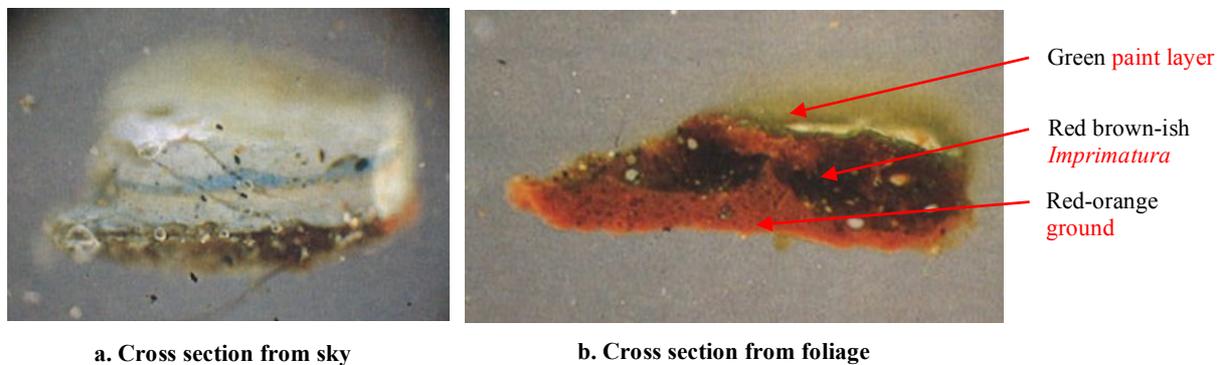


Figure 18: Cross sections from Paolo Bensi's technical study of Magnasco's *Trattenimento*.

The analysis of materials used in the ground layer can be of paramount importance in offering clues concerning the dating and geographical indication of a painting. In eighteenth-century northern Italy, artists often bought pre-prepared canvases from craftsman.³³ The particular composition of the ground can indicate a specific workshop or at the very least a specific geographic area.³⁴

The red-brown *imprimatura* was typical in the eighteenth-century paintings from Liguria, the region of Genova and Lombardy the region of Milan, while red-orange ground

³¹ Franchini Guelfi 1991, 110-111; Franchini Guelfi and Damian 2015, 84-91; Di Fabio, 'Il "Trattenimento in un giardino d'Albaro" di Alessandro Magnasco. Appunti per la storia e la genesi di un dipinto' in Di Fabio 1990, 11-18.

³² Bensi 1991, 117; Bensi 1990, 25.

³³ Private communication with Paolo Bensi, 2016; Louisa C. Matthew, 'Vendecolori a Venezia': The Reconstruction of a Profession', *The Burlington Magazine*, 144: 1196 (2002), 680-686; Gian Batista Volpato, 'Modo da tener nel dipingere', in Mary P. Merrifield. *Original Treatises, dating from the XIIIth to the XVIIIth century on the Arts of painting* (London: John Murray, 1849 repr. 1967), Vol 2: 727-258 (731); Maria Grazia Albertini Ottolenghi, 'Modo da tener nel dipingere, supporti, preparazioni, colori, procedimenti esecutivi', in *Settecento Lombardo*, ed. Rossana Bossaglia and Valerio Torraroli (Milan, 1991), 48-53.

³⁴ Bensi, *La vita del colore. Tecniche della pittura veneta dal Cinquecento al Settecento* (Genoa: Neos Edizioni, 2002), 81-83.

layers of ochre and minium were more specifically used in Veneto since the end of the sixteenth century by artists like Jacopo Bassano [1510-1592] and then popularised in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and used by numerous artists including Sebastiano Ricci, Bencovich [1667-1753], Piazzetta [1682/3-1754], Tiepolo and Canaletto.³⁵

The presence of minium in the ground is indicative of a canvas prepared in the Veneto area, as in this region the red bole used in the preparatory layers contained this pigment.³⁶

The absence of gypsum or chalk from these preparatory layers reduces the porosity of the grounds, thus weakening the adhesion of the paint layers above and resulting in lifting or flaking of the paint. This exposes the preparatory layers to a higher degree and alters the chromatic relationship of the painting.³⁷

Cross section and SEM-EDX analysis of the ground layer in the Courtauld's painting has revealed only one application of a red-orange-brown ground composed of red and brown ochres and an aluminosilicate (Fig. 19).

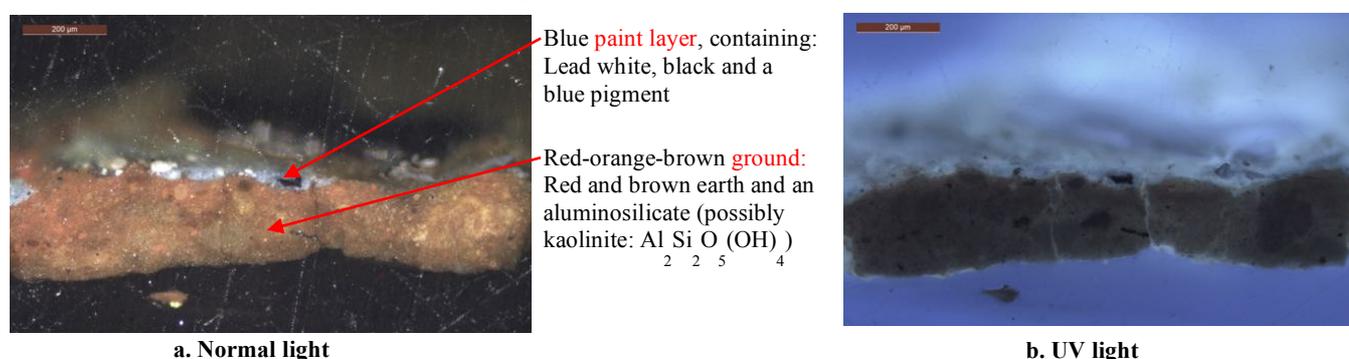


Figure 19: Micrographs of cross section taken from the sky, *Landscape with Washerwomen*.

In a recipe from the late-seventeenth century Volpato Manuscript on the art of painting, the author reports that he would ‘use red and brown ochres’ as well as ‘terra da bocali’ (‘mugs earth’).³⁸ This has now been identified as China clay (i.e. the aluminosilicate kaolinite $\text{Al}_2\text{Si}_2\text{O}_5(\text{OH})_4$). The absence of minium in the ground indicates that the canvas was more likely to have been prepared in Lombardy, the region of Milan where Peruzzini was living after his return from Tuscany in 1712 until his death in 1724.

The layering structure in Magnasco's *Trattenimento* is simple and the paint layer is applied directly on the imprimatura (Fig 18b). However, a cross section taken from the sky presents a more complex stratigraphic structure, where it is possible to see five layers, light blue, peachy pink, blue, light grey and light blue (Fig 18a). As mentioned above, a similar

³⁵ Bensi 1991, 117; Joyce Plesters, ‘Photomicrograph of cross sections of paint and ground samples’, *Museum*, 21:4 (1968), 245-276 (261-262, 264); Albertini Ottolenghi 1991, 50.

³⁶ Bensi 2002, 81-82; private communication with Bensi, 2016.

³⁷ a) Bensi 2002, 82; G. Nepi Scire, ‘La pittura su tela’ in *Dal Museo alla Città, Venezia Itinerari didattici n.4 CP* (Venice: Soprintendenza ai beni artistici e storici di Venezia-sezione didattica, Ed. Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1983), 80.

³⁸ Volpato 1849, 731.

structure is seen in the build-up of the clouds in the sky in the Courtauld's *Landscape with Washerwomen*.

Bensi's study also suggests that Magnasco's palette included pigments which were relatively rare at the time, such as copper resinate, which was mainly used from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, to produce warm, dark green glazes, Prussian Blue, which was first invented in the early-eighteenth century, and lead tin yellow, which was used from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, most commonly between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁹ Magnasco and his friend Sebastiano Ricci were among the last painters to use the latter pigment, though this pigment was not found in the *Trattenimento*, and among the first painters to use Prussian Blue.

Prussian Blue was synthesised in 1703, with the first known uses from around 1712 in Germany.⁴⁰ In Italy it was firstly used by Canaletto from the 1720s onwards, and Tiepolo beginning with the *Scuola Grande del Carmine* (1739–1749). Magnasco's pioneering use of the pigment may perhaps be due to influences from Venice.⁴¹ Sebastiano Ricci is also known to have used Prussian blue. The type of blue pigment used, and the presence or absence of Prussian Blue can therefore be particularly helpful in assessing the date and attribution of paintings around this date.

A cross section taken from the Courtauld *Landscape*'s sky (Fig. 19b) revealed that the paint was applied thinly in the darker sections of the sky without clouds, and that this colour is obtained by a mixture of lead white, black and a blue pigment.

Elemental analysis conducted via SEM-EDX allowed us to restrict the blue to two possible pigments: Prussian blue⁴² or Indigo.⁴³ Subsequently, analysis using a portable FT-IR machine has proved that the blue pigment in the sky of *Landscape with Washerwomen* is not Prussian Blue, and Raman spectroscopy has confirmed that this blue pigment is indeed Indigo, a blue pigment used before Prussian Blue became popular.⁴⁴ Given that the first known uses of Prussian Blue in Italy date to the 1720s, and Peruzzini died in 1724, it is likely that he used Indigo as a blue pigment. The pigment's presence in *Landscape with Washerwomen* is therefore consistent with what is known of the date and location in which Peruzzini was working.

The type of canvas used in *Landscape with Washerwomen* is also consistent with those used at the time and in this region. SEM analysis has revealed this to be linen (Fig.

³⁹ Bensi 1991, 117-118; Bensi 1990, 25.

⁴⁰ Jo Kirby, 'Fading and Colour Change of Prussian Blue: Occurrences and Early Reports', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 14 (1993), 62-71 (63).

⁴¹ Bensi 1991, 117-118; Bensi 1990, 25.

⁴² Barbara Hepburn Berrie, 'Prussian blue', in *Artists pigments: A Handbook of their History and Characteristics*, 3rd vol. ed. Elizabeth West FitzHugh (Washington: NGA, 1998), 191-218.

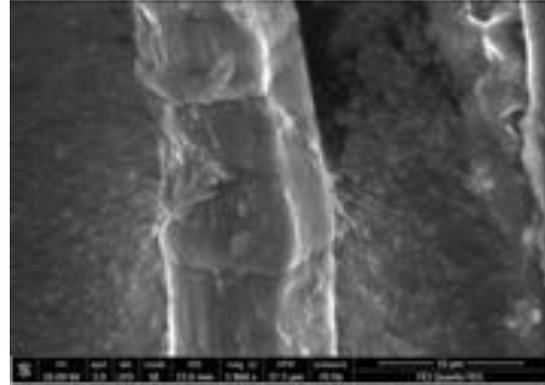
⁴³ Helmut Schweppe, 'Indigo and Woad', in FitzHugh 1998, 81- 107.

⁴⁴ Since the second presentation in the research forum, analysis of the blue paint layer via Raman Spectroscopy was done and confirmed the presence of the pigment indigo in the sky.

20);⁴⁵ linen was the most frequently used textile for canvas in the Lombardy at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶



a. Micrograph of the linen threads used in the analysis



b. SEM Image of one of the linen fibres

Figure 20: SEM Analysis.

Technical details highlighted by the studies so far and described above have thus indicated that *Landscape with Washerwomen* is technically consistent with what is known of the physical characteristics of paintings made by artists in Magnasco and Peruzzini's circle.

⁴⁵ Debora D. Mayer, 'Identification of textile fibres found in common painting supports', in *Conservation of Easel Paintings*, ed. J. Hill-Stoner & R. Rushfield (London: Routledge, 2012), 497.

⁴⁶ Albertini Ottolenghi 1991, 48-53.

Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac: a pendant to Landscape with Washerwomen?

As part of the investigation of *Landscape with Washerwomen*, we also considered the possibility that the Courtauld's painting might be a 'pendant', that is, one of two paintings conceived as a pair, often for a particular domestic setting, either side of a fireplace or window, or to fill a space of particular dimensions.⁴⁷ In keeping with contemporary custom, Magnasco and Peruzzini's circle produced a number of surviving landscape pendant pairs, which share physical similarities, such as canvas size and thematic interaction. While some well-known examples of pendant landscapes, such as Claude's *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* (1648) and *The Mill* (1648), present two entirely different atmospheres, with the time of day, weather and vista providing a point of contrast between the two scenes, many pendants from Magnasco and Peruzzini's circle, like *Saint Paul* and *The Temptation of Saint Paul* (1716), present two scenes taking place in similar locations, with the same atmospheric conditions (Fig. 21).

The Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon's *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac* was therefore identified as deserving particular attention as a possible pendant to the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Washerwomen*. In addition to the stylistic similarities in the sky, foliage and landscape details, outlined above, the Lyon landscape's dimensions, 98 x 75 cm, are notably similar to the Courtauld painting, which measures 98 x 71 cm. This small difference in size can be accounted for by later linings using different sized stretchers: though the object history of Lyon's *Paysage* is unknown before its acquisition by the museum in 1956, the Courtauld painting has been lined at least once in its history. It is of course possible that other paintings may share this size and shape; these may be pre-prepared canvases, which were not uncommon in early-eighteenth century Italy. Nevertheless, if *Landscape with washerwomen* had a pendant, the Lyon painting is a clear contender, painted by the same landscape artist, on a canvas that matches dimensions of the Courtauld *Landscape*.

Other pairs of pendant landscapes which Muti *et al* attribute to Magnasco and Peruzzini's 'late' collaboration in the years 1710-1724 make an interesting comparison to the Courtauld and Lyon landscapes viewed as a pair. The spindly trees which bend to mimic the oval frames of *Saint Paul* and *The Temptation of Saint Paul*, and the particular texture of the cloud formations, give this pendant pair a compositional and atmospheric unity. Another pair attributed to Magnasco and Peruzzini, *Preghiera davanti ad un'immagine sacra* and *Gli uccellatori* (1720-22) (Fig.22), also share their particular breed of thick-trunked, delicate-foliaged trees, which again echo the oval framing of the composition; pale creamy light streak their skies in horizontal bands, below which a shared horizon of blue, rocky mountains is visible in the distance. The taller, heavier trees on the left of *Saint Paul* and *Preghiera davanti ad un'immagine sacra*, and on the right of *Temptation of Saint Paul* and *Gli uccellatori*, act to frame both sets of landscapes, suggesting a unified, circular motion to the

⁴⁷ 'Pendants', <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/pendant> [accessed 5 March 2016]



Figure 21: Antonio Francesco Peruzzini and Alessandro Magnasco, *Saint Paul and The Temptation of Saint Paul*, 1716. Oil on canvas, 115cmx92cm (oval). Berlin, Staatliche Museen Gemaldegalerie.



Figure 22: Antonio Francesco Peruzzini and Alessandro Magnasco, *Preghiera davanti ad un'immagine sacra*, and *Gli uccellatori*, 1720-22. Oil on canvas, 95x72cm and 94x72cm (oval).



Figure 23: Possible pendant display of *Landscape with Washerwomen* with *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac*.

composition of both pairs. Placed side by side, with *Landscape with Washerwomen* to the left of *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac* (Fig. 23), these paintings seem to share this compositional agreement, with the weighty foreground tree in *Paysage* balanced by similar foliage protruding from the middle ground on the left of the *Landscape*. The blue and white-streaked mountains meet at the right and left borders, giving their pair a shared horizon line just below the midpoint. The clouds in both paintings not only share their 'squiggle' brushstrokes, but also their shape and formation, giving the paintings a striking atmospheric and compositional harmony. The figures in both compositions even seem arranged to compliment the corresponding composition: figures in the Courtauld *Landscape* are arranged on a diagonal from the lower right to the mid-left of the canvas, and the strong diagonal lean of the strong-limbed figures in the Lyon *Paysage* animate the pairs' shared circular composition. The Courtauld *Landscape*'s washerwoman and standing peasant almost look across the frame to the corresponding figures in the *Paysage* scene.

This hypothesis becomes more complicated, however, if this close comparison of figures in the Lyon and Courtauld paintings is taken any further. Though the Lyon *Paysage* shares enough stylistic similarities with the Courtauld and Ashmolean landscapes to support the argument that its landscape was painted by the same hand, the figures in the Lyon *Paysage* have a sophistication beyond those in the Courtauld and Ashmolean paintings. The current attribution of *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac* to Magnasco seems justified by the proportions, costumes and detailing exhibited in these figures, which appear very close to Magnasco's autograph figures. Exaggerated, elongated limbs and contorted poses of dynamic movement, and the exaggerated differences in size between the different characters are

characteristic of Magnasco's intricate figure work. The man in the lower right of the *Paysage* (Fig. 24a-b) is perhaps recognisable as a 'picaro', or gipsy bohemian, a characteristic subject for Magnasco along with monks, washerwomen and anglers; the long nose just visible beneath the wide-brimmed hat aligns the figure with other 'picaro' types, like those in *The Magpie Singing Lesson* (Fig.24c-d). By contrast, the figures in the Courtauld and Ashmolean paintings seem intended to mimic Magnasco's dynamic figures in movement, but their awkward, stilted poses and dumpy proportions cannot be given to Magnasco's hand. If the Lyon and Courtauld paintings were at one time intended as a pair, their relationship is therefore more complicated than the simplest understanding of the term 'pendant'.



a. Detail of 'picaro' from the Lyon *Paysage*



b. Detail of 'picaro' from the Lyon *Paysage*



c. Alessandro Magnasco, *The Magpie Singing Lesson*, 1745. Private collection.



d. Detail of 'picaros' from the *Magpie Singing Lesson*

Figure 24: Comparison of 'picaro' from *Paysage avec figures au bord un' lac* and *The Magpie Singing Lesson*.

However the assumption that ‘pendant’ paintings were necessarily commissioned as a pair and painted contemporaneously has now been shown to be rather limited, as it rules out a number of possibilities in the client-artist dynamic. The 4th Duke of Bedford of Woburn Abbey, for example, is known to have purchased not just two pendant paintings of Canaletto’s work, but twenty-four paintings of different shapes and sizes, which were nevertheless intended to be displayed as a group.⁴⁸ It is also possible that patrons bought or intended to buy a single work, but commissioned a second painting, to compliment and complete the first. Recent developments in the scholarship on Magnasco and Peruzzini’s collaborative working patterns already complicates our understanding of their output, but also raises questions regarding the process and timing of these collaborations: if the figure painter added details to a previously painted landscape by another artist, how much time could pass between these two stages in the process? Could unfinished landscapes intended as pendant pairs become separated during production? Might different painters add figures to landscapes intended as pendants? Could *Landscape with washerwomen* have been completed to compliment the *Lyon Paysage*, or vice versa? Learning more about the physical history of the *Lyon Paysage* might help to understand if and how these paintings relate to each other, and whether they were painted during common campaigns of work; however, it has not been possible to access this kind of information for this investigation. Nevertheless we might hypothesise that Peruzzini completed the two landscapes, intending them as a pendant pair, Magnasco added figures to the *Lyon Paysage*, and a hitherto unnamed collaborator added corresponding figures to the Courtauld *Landscape*. As suggested above, the compositional unity of the two paintings is not limited to the landscape compositions, but is also evoked in the diagonal arrangements and interaction of the figures across the two paintings. From this we would speculate tentatively that the paintings were still conceived of as a pair even it was known that their figures would be added by different artists.

To investigate whether these paintings were sold as a pair, or ever shown together, required a different approach, and a closer examination of both paintings’ known history and provenance seemed justified. By coincidence, the Courtauld Gallery’s *Landscape with Washerwomen* and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon’s *Paysage avec figures au bord d’un lac* both appeared on the art market within a few years of each other. In 1956 the *Lyon Paysage* was acquired through the Dutch dealer D.A. Hoogendijk in exchange for two portraits by Van der Voort.⁴⁹ In 1961 Count Seilern purchased *Landscape with Washerwomen* from Sir Philip Nichols, who had inherited the painting from F.M. Nichols

⁴⁸ The 4th Duke visited Venice while on his Grand Tour in 1731, and probably commissioned the works through Joseph Smith, Canaletto’s agent. The Woburn Abbey Archives hold three bills to Smith, dated 1733, 1735 and 1736. See also J.G. Links and William George Constable, *Canaletto: Giovanni Antonio Canal 1697-1768*, 2nd ed. 2 vols (New York: Clarendon Press, 1976).

⁴⁹ Correspondence between curator Rene Julian and dealer D.A. Hoogendijk relating to this acquisition is held in the curatorial files at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon.

Nichols, who had bought it in the posthumous sale of Sir Walter Wyndham Burrell in 1897.⁵⁰ However it is clear from the catalogue of this sale that *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac* was not among the other paintings in the Burrell collection at this date.

Sir Walter Wyndham Burrell [1814-1886] was the 5th Baronet of the Baronetsy created in 1766 for his great-great-uncle the politician Sir Merrik Burrell, but it was his great-grandfather, the 2nd Baronet Sir William Burrell [1732-1796], who probably purchased the bulk of the Burrell collection sold at the 1897 auction. Sir William's career as an antiquarian and historian of the countryside seem reflected in the impressive number of landscapes in the collection.⁵¹ Twenty of the thirty-four landscapes are listed as the work of Dutch or Flemish artists, whose work was particularly popular in late-eighteenth-century England, when Sir William was commissioning other works in the collection, like the valuable portraits of Sir William and his wife by Sir Thomas Lawrence. *Landscape with Washerwomen* sits well among the other domestic and Arcadian landscapes which seem to have been so well-represented in Sir William's art collection.

When the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon attempted to trace the provenance of *Paysage avec figures au bord un' lac* in 1957, the dealer D.A. Hoojendijk regretted that he was unable to give more information other than that he had bought the painting in London, and it had come from a 'collection particulière anglaise' (an English private collection).⁵² Numerous sales catalogues attest to the popularity of pendant paintings attributed to Marco Ricci, as the Courtauld and Lyon paintings would likely have been labelled for sale in Britain; the Getty Provenance Index Sale Catalog Database indicates that Marco Ricci was listed in 312 sales lots between 1700 and 1800.⁵³ Several of these lots, like the 'Two upright Landscapes and Figures', listed lot 28 in the sale of Captain Richard Evans in 1757, could perhaps refer to the Lyon and Courtauld paintings as pendants; in this example, the two paintings on sale were sold separately, one for £1 7 shillings and the second for an unlisted price.⁵⁴ The brevity of descriptions and the lack of dimensions in sale catalogues of this kind prevents us from taking these conjectures further. We might however speculate that the paintings had been brought to Britain as a pair from Italy, perhaps by a gentleman on the Grand Tour, between their creation c.1710-24 and the Burrell acquisition of *Landscape with Washerwomen* probably in the second half of the century, before the death of Sir William Burrell in 1797.

⁵⁰ Seilern 1969, 25.

⁵¹ Sir William Burrell's research was concentrated on history of the county of Sussex. On his death, his unpublished papers were bequeathed to the British Museum, now British Library Add. 5676, 5677. See W. H. Godfrey and L. F. Salzman, *Sussex Views* (Sussex Record Society Jubilee Volume, 1951).

⁵² Correspondence between assistant curator Madeleine Rocher-Jauneau and D.A. Hoogendijk, dated 7 March and 14 March 1957. Curatorial files, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon.

⁵³ Getty Provenance Index Sale Catalog Database [accessed 3 May 2016].

⁵⁴ Lot 28, 'Two upright Landscapes and Figures', *Catalogue of Captain Richard Evans, 9-10 March 1757 thorough Prestage, London* (London: Prestage, 1757). Getty Provenance Index.

Conclusions

This collaborative research project sought to examine the art-historical context, subsequent history, and technical attributes of the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Washerwomen*, previously attributed to Alessandro Magnasco. Through close comparison of the painting's style, composition, materials and techniques, we must conclude that this painting is not the work of Magnasco, but that of two other artists from his circle working in close collaboration: the landscape artist Antonio Francesco Peruzzini, with whom Magnasco is documented to have worked on numerous occasions, and another, hitherto unnamed artist, who painted the figures of *Landscape with Washerwomen* in a manner that mimics Magnasco's work. Technical analysis of *Landscape with Washerwomen* demonstrated that the painting is consistent with what is known of the physical characteristics of paintings attributed to Magnasco and Peruzzini's circle, though the unfortunate scarcity of technical studies on the work of this group of artists limits further possible conclusions. On the strength of canvas size, composition, circumstantial and stylistic evidence, and in the absence of technical or archival evidence to the contrary, we would hypothesize that *Landscape with Washerwomen* was once intended as a pendant to the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon's painting, *Paysage avec figures au bord d'un lac*. Further investigation into this painting's physical history would be required to test this hypothesis, however.

At the time of writing, the Ashmolean Museum's *Landscape with figures and a waterfall* is the only painting catalogued as the work of Peruzzini in a British public collection. There has been little written on Peruzzini in English, and the reappraisal of this artist has until now been limited to the Italian literature. Thus, the name of Antonio Francesco Peruzzini remains largely unknown in this country, despite his possible involvement in a number of paintings in British public collections. In our own collaboration as an Italian conservator and an English art historian, we have been struck by these differences in the state of research in Italy and Britain. It is hoped that this investigation has gone a little way to effecting a change in these circumstances, and that this research collaboration can start a conversation about Peruzzini and his circle with a wider audience, as the first of more technical studies of these artists, whose works have received little attention of this kind to date, and, as a catalyst for the re-examination of other works attributed to Magnasco and Peruzzini's circle in Britain. Attributing the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Washerwomen* to Peruzzini and his unnamed collaborator is by no means intended as a slight on the painting's quality. This reattribution is instead intended as an acknowledgement of this talented landscape artist previously neglected in English language scholarship, and as a recognition of the utmost skill of these artists, who worked in such seamless, almost undetectable collaboration.

Acknowledgements

Karen Serres, Courtauld Gallery Curator and Graeme Barraclough, Gallery conservator

Prof Aviva Burnstock and Dr Elisabeth Reissner, C&T Dept, Courtauld Institute

Véronique Damian, Galerie Canesso Paris

Fausta Franchini Guelfi, Independent Scholar

Ms Perilio and D.ssa Papone, Musei di Strada Nuova Genova

Prof. Paolo Bensi, University of Genoa

Benedicte Tremolieres, Conservator, Louvre Paris

Dr Donatella Montanari and Ms Cinzia Pini, Museo di Palazzo Reale, Pisa

Gérard Bruyere and Ludmilla Virassamynaiken, Musée des Beaux Arts, Lyon

Jevon Thistlewood and Angelamaria Aceto, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Heiner Krellig, Deutsches Studienzentrum, Venice

Staff of the Courtauld Prints and Drawings Room

Scientific department of the Natural History Museum

Dr Giovanni Verri, Wall Painting Conservation, Courtauld Institute of Art

Dr Lucia Burgio, Scientific Department, Victoria and Albert Museum

William Luckhurst, Nanophotonics Lab, King's College London

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