

Camille Pissarro

Biography

- 1830 Camille Pissarro is born on 10 July on Saint Thomas (then an island of the Danish Antilles), the youngest of four sons. His parents, Rachel Manzana-Pomié (1795–1889) and Frédéric Abraham-Gabriel Pissarro (1802–1865) keep a general store in the city of Charlotte Amalie. They are both practising Jews. In France, the Bourbons are overthrown in the July Revolution (Les Trois Glorieuses). Louis-Philippe of Orléans is made ‘citizen king’.
- 1842–1848 Pissarro's father was born in the Bordeaux region. In order to ensure a French education for him his parents send him to a boarding school at Passy (today Paris). Camille begins to draw at school. After his return he starts working in his parents' business. The 1848 Revolution shakes France and has repercussions across Europe. Louis Napoleon is elected president of the Second Republic.
- 1852–1854 Without his parents' permission, Pissarro accompanies Danish painter Fritz Melbye (1826–1869) to Venezuela. They set up a studio together in Caracas and tour the country. Meanwhile there is a military coup in France. In 1852 Louis Napoleon establishes the Second Empire and crowns himself Emperor Napoleon III.
- 1855–1857 Pissarro travels to Paris to study art. At the wish of his parents he takes lessons with teachers of the École des Beaux-Arts. At the Universal Exposition of 1855 Pissarro discovers the paintings of Camille Corot, Gustave Courbet and Eugene Delacroix. He also frequents the Académie Suisse, an independent studio. There he meets fellow artists Claude Monet, Armand Guillaumin, and later Paul Cézanne. All France is in the grip of modernisation fever. In the course of the ‘Haussmannisation’ of Paris, the city is radically modernised.
- 1859 Pissarro's parents move to Paris. They give their son regular financial support. The Salon accepts one of his landscapes. Pissarro is listed in the catalogue as a ‘pupil of Anton Melbye’.
- 1860 During excursions to the countryside around Paris, Pissarro gets to know amateur artist Ludovic Piette. They will be close friends until henceforth. At his parents' house, he falls in love with Julie Vellay (1838–1926), their kitchen maid.
- 1863 At the request of Napoleon III, all the works rejected by the Salon jury were to be presented at the Palais de l'Industrie. Pissarro participates in this Salon des Refusés with 3 paintings. Monet introduces Pissarro to Auguste Renoir

and Alfred Sisley. Lucien, the first son of Julie and Camille, is born. The family moves to La Varenne-Saint-Hilaire near Paris.

- 1864 Two of Pissarro's landscapes are accepted by the Salon. This time he describes himself in the catalogue as a 'pupil of A. Melbye and Corot'. Pissarro pays a first visit to Piette on his farm in Montfoucault. He will often return there to paint.
- 1865 Pissarro has another landscape accepted by the Salon and again describes himself as a 'pupil of Melbye and Corot'. His father dies in Paris. His first daughter, Jeanne Rachel (Minette) is born. Pissarro's mother takes seriously ill and he consults Dr Paul-Ferdinand Gachet in Auvers-sur-Oise. Gachet accepts paintings as payment and becomes one of the greatest supporters of Impressionism. Pissarro meets the critic and author Émile Zola.
- 1866–1869 After falling out with Corot, Pissarro drops the words 'and Corot' from his self-description, referring to himself henceforth only as a pupil of Melbye. He is a frequent guest at the regular Thursday soirees held in Zola's apartment. In Café Guerbois, in the district of Batignolles, he meets Edouard Manet. The painter is a regular of the cafe and the centre of a group of friends and admirers. With Charles-François Daubigny on the jury, Pissarro's paintings are accepted by the Salons of 1868 and 1869. His family lives off a small allowance from his mother and money that he earns working as a decorator with Guillaumin.
- 1870 Once again, two of Pissarro's paintings are exhibited at the Salon. He meets critic and art lover Théodore Duret, who is interested in his work. On 18 July, France declares war on the North German Confederation. When the German troops begin to advance on Paris, the Pissarros are forced to leave their house. They flee to Piette's house. While they are there, Camille and Julie's second daughter, Adele-Emma, is born, but she dies only a few weeks later. The Pissarros flee on to London in December. The Third Republic is proclaimed in September after the Prussian Army captures Napoleon III.
- 1871 In London, Pissarro meets Monet. Daubigny, another refugee in London, introduces him to Parisian art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel. The war ends in January with a ceasefire and the election of a new National Assembly, but it is not until May that the revolutionary government, the Paris Commune, is brutally suppressed by the French army. On 14 July, Julie Vellay und Camille Pissarro are married. The Pissarros return to Louveciennes and find their house destroyed. Almost all of Pissarro's early work is lost; only about 40 paintings remain, rescued by a neighbour. A second son, Georges Henri, is born in November.
- 1872 Thanks to Durand-Ruel's first purchases, Pissarro is at last financially independent. The family moves to Pontoise near Paris. Their first house is in l'Hermitage. Soon afterwards, Cézanne moves to Auvers-sur-Oise to work in Pissarro's proximity.

- 1874 The *Societe anonyme des artistes, peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs etc.*, established by Pissarro and Monet in 1873, holds its first exhibition in the studio of the photographer Nadar. Pissarro makes sure that Cézanne and Guillaumin participate in the group exhibition. Thirty artists exhibit, including Degas, Berthe Morisot, Renoir and Sisley. Because of the financial strain of the exhibition, the Pissarros return to Montfoucault. Pissarro's daughter Jeanne (Minette) dies in infancy of tuberculosis. A third son, Felix (Titi) is born in the summer.
- 1875 Guillaumin introduces Pissarro to pastry chef, writer and amateur painter Eugène Murer, who holds regular soirees at his pâtisserie on the boulevard Voltaire. These are attended by the Impressionists and their supporters. Durand-Ruel is on the verge of financial ruin. He will be unable to buy work from Pissarro until 1880.
- 1876 The Second Impressionist Exhibition is held in Paul Durand-Ruel's gallery. This time, Degas, Monet, Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley are joined, amongst others, by Gustave Caillebotte. Pissarro shows 12 pictures at the exhibition, all in the last of the three galleries. Financial constraints force him to give up his Paris flat.
- 1877 The Third Impressionist Exhibition is only possible thanks to financial backing from Caillebotte. The group, now officially known as the 'Impressionists', enjoy their first public success. Monet makes a breakthrough with his series of Saint-Lazare station. Degas exhibits for the first time his monotypes touched up with pastel. Pissarro contributes 22 landscapes. It is only thanks to the support of Caillebotte and Murer that Pissarro is able to escape the bailiff. Pissarro gets to know the stockbroker Paul Gauguin. Gauguin has recently invested 15 000 francs in a collection of works by Pissarro, Manet, Cézanne, Renoir, Monet and others. The amateur painter aspires to make a career as an artist.
- 1878 Pissarro's long-time friend and supporter Piette dies. In his honour, he names his fourth son after him: Ludovic-Rodolphe (Rodo). To help Pissarro, Murer buys some of his paintings and commissions him to paint his portrait. Caillebotte, Duret and collector Georges de Bellio also support him by purchasing individual works.
- 1879 Mary Cassatt and Paul Gauguin take part in the Fourth Impressionist Exhibition. Degas rules that no member may submit work to both the Salon and the group exhibition. Sisley and Renoir respond by refraining from participating in the Impressionist exhibition. Monet exhibits but doesn't deign to visit. Pissarro shows 38 works. He and Degas show painted fans for the first time. Reviews are considerably kinder than in the past and a financial success. Gauguin travels to Pontoise to see Pissarro.
- 1880 Pissarro, Cassatt and Degas work on their etchings together. At the Fifth Impressionist Exhibition, Pissarro shows ten paintings and a series of nine etchings. Sixteen artists exhibit in total, but this time Monet joins Cézanne, Sisley and Renoir in sending paintings to the Salon rather than joining the group

exhibition. Thanks to assistance from the Union Générale bank, Durand-Ruel is able to buy Pissarro's work again.

- 1881 At the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition, Pissarro, too, enjoys success at last, receiving several positive reviews. There is a rift with Caillebotte who accuses Degas of dominating the group with his untalented pupils. Pissarro exhibits 28 works, including 15 gouaches and 2 pastels. He continues to work with Cézanne and Gauguin in Pontoise. His third daughter, Jeanne-Marguerite (known as Cocotte), is born in August.
- 1882 The collapse of the Union Générale bank triggers the Paris stock market crash and the whole of France is gripped by financial crisis. Paul Durand-Ruel is among those who are hard hit and he is unable to support the Impressionists with his purchases in the usual manner. He does, however, help organise the Seventh Impressionist Exhibition; many of the works come from his own stocks. Degas and his group are absent from the exhibition. Pissarro shows 36 works altogether, including, for the first time, large figure paintings. At the end of the year, the Pissarros move to Osny near Pontoise, in order to cut down on rent.
- 1883 Durand-Ruel holds the first solo exhibition devoted to Pissarro, but the reviews are mixed. Pissarro feels that he and his painting are in a crisis. He begins his correspondence with his son Lucien, who has moved to London. Pissarro paints his first cityscape series in Rouen, where his friend and mentor Murer has a hotel. Gauguin follows Pissarro to Rouen. Durand-Ruel is so impressed by the new urban motifs that he buys several paintings.
- 1884 The Pissarros move to Éragny-sur-Epte, close to Gisors in Normandy. Their youngest son, Paul-Emile, is born.
- 1885 The first 'Impressionist dinners' are held in Café Riche (Paris), every first Thursday of the month. Pissarro meets Paul Signac in Guillaumin's studio and is introduced to Georges Seurat. Signac and Seurat are now known as the founders of Neo-Impressionism. Pissarro begins his first works in this style. At Gallery Boussod & Valadon, Pissarro meets Theo van Gogh.
- 1886 The Eighth and last Impressionist Exhibition is held. The group is beginning to fall apart. Works by Signac, Seurat and Pissarro are displayed in a separate room. The critics focus on the Neo-Impressionist aesthetic and praise Pissarro's paintings of country life. Durand-Ruel wants to make the Impressionists known in the United States and travels there with 300 paintings, including 40 by Pissarro. He will open a gallery in New York two years later. Theo van Gogh introduces Pissarro to his brother Vincent.

- 1887 At Octave Maus's invitation, Pissarro and Seurat show their new works in Brussels at an exhibition of the group *Les XX*. Pissarro shows other works in the same style at the *Exposition internationale de peinture et de sculpture* organised by Georges Petit, a rival of Durand-Ruel, in his flourishing gallery in the heart of Paris. Pissarro makes the acquaintance of writer Octave Mirbeau, who will be one of his most loyal supporters.
- 1888 Durand-Ruel exhibits works of art by Renoir, Sisley and Pissarro but does not include any of Pissarro's Neo-Impressionist paintings. Theo van Gogh agrees to try to sell Pissarro's new paintings at Boussod & Valadon. Even so, Pissarro's financial situation worsens dramatically. Pissarro engages in vigorous discussions with young Neo-Impressionists such as Maximilien Luce and Louis Hayet. He develops an inflammatory eye disease that will prove chronic.
- 1889 The centenary of the French Revolution is celebrated in Paris. The Eiffel Tower is built for the Universal Exposition. Pissarro's work is exhibited at the exposition, but he is unhappy with the presentation.
- 1890 Theo van Gogh organises a solo exhibition for Pissarro. Pissarro travels to London to visit Lucien, who is working as a woodcut artist and typographer. Lucien and Georges come to Éragny for the summer to paint with their father. Pissarro expresses the desire to found an aesthetic movement. Drawings by Lucien are published in the anarchist weekly *Le Père Peinard*. Vincent van Gogh, who was in the care of Dr Gachet in Auvers, dies from a self-inflicted bullet wound.
- 1891 Seurat dies in Paris at the age of 31. Pissarro and Gauguin quarrel when Gauguin embraces Symbolism. After the death of art dealer Theo van Gogh Pissarro renews relations with his old *marchand* Durand-Ruel. Together with Degas and Cassatt, he exhibits his prints in Durand-Ruel's gallery. Mirbeau puts Pissarro in touch with Auguste Rodin, who buys a painting from him.
- 1892 Durand-Ruel holds his second solo exhibition of Pissarro's work, and this one is a success. From now on, he will buy several paintings after each exhibition to ensure Pissarro's loyalty and keep prices up. Pissarro travels to London with Neo-Impressionist Luce to attend Lucien's wedding. During his absence, Monet and Durand-Ruel lend Julie Pissarro money (15,000 and 3,000 francs respectively) to buy the family home in Éragny.
- 1893 While in Paris, Pissarro puts up at Hotel Garnier (Rue Saint-Lazare). Painting cityscapes from his window soon becomes a habit, but Pissarro continues to spend most of his time in Éragny. As it has become almost impossible for him to work outside, he makes himself a studio. Durand-Ruel exhibits his new work (46 paintings in all) in his Paris gallery. The front page of the May issue of the anarchist journal *La Plume* shows a drawing by Pissarro.

- 1894 Pissarro mourns the loss of three close friends and supporters: collector Georges de Bellio, art dealer Père Tanguy and artist Gustave Caillebotte. Caillebotte leaves his collection of paintings to the French state. The state, however, accepts only 7 of Pissarro's 18 works. In May, he sees Monet's Rouen Cathedral series and is impressed. The Pissarros spend the summer in the Belgian seaside resort of Knokke. On 25 June, the Italian anarchist Sante Geronimo Caserio assassinates the French president Sadi Carnot. Pissarro repudiates the violence, but as a self-confessed anarchist sympathiser decides it is safer to remain abroad until the dust has settled. Lucien founds the *Eragny Press* and calls his house *Eragny House*. His drawings are printed in anarchist publications.
- 1895 Pissarro exhibits with the group *La Libre Esthétique* in Brussels. Durand-Ruel, still reeling from the economic crisis, lowers the price he will pay for Pissarro's pictures. In November, he goes to Paris to help Cézanne with the first public exhibition of his work since 1877.
- 1896 His financial situation improves enough to allow him to begin to repay his debts with Monet. In Rouen, he paints a series of the harbour in different light and weather, comparable to Monet's cathedral series. An exhibition of these paintings in Durand-Ruel's gallery is a success. He returns to Rouen, this time changing hotel for a different perspective.
- 1897 Pissarro paints the boulevard Montmartre and the boulevard des Italiens (both in Paris) from the Grand Hotel de Russie. Durand-Ruel mounts an exhibition entitled *Views of Rouen* at his New York gallery. Impressionism is very well received in the United States. Pissarro's work is also shown at the Second *Carnegie International Exhibition* in Pittsburgh. Pissarro gets to know Henri Matisse and advises him to study Signac. On 25 November, Pissarro's son Felix dies of tuberculosis, aged 23. His relations with Mirbeau improve considerably after Mirbeau writes an affectionate article about the Pissarro artists and an obituary of Felix.
- 1898 The Dreyfus Affair rocks France to its core. Following a miscarriage of justice, Captain Alfred Dreyfus is falsely accused of treason and banished from France. High-ranking military officials, clergymen and politicians fight fiercely against his rehabilitation. Zola has to leave the country to avoid imprisonment after defending Dreyfus in his article «J'accuse» (*L'Aurore*, 13 January). Pissarro is also one of Dreyfus' defendants. Pissarro's friendship with Degas and Renoir comes to grief over their open antisemitism. Pissarro also goes to Rouen for the last time to paint views of the harbour and bridges. He completes 20 paintings.
- 1899 Pissarro returns to painting Paris. He takes a flat in 204 rue de Rivoli. Alfred Sisley, one of the first Impressionists, dies. Pissarro is hit hard by his death. Pissarro's financial situation is secure enough to allow him to stay in Paris with his family, returning to Éragny in fine weather. He turns with enthusiasm to painting new

motifs in Éragny, and in particular his garden. Durand-Ruel holds another group exhibition, this time with works by Corot, Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Pissarro. Pissarro has a solo exhibition at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris, which is very well received.

- 1900 Seven paintings and one drawing by Pissarro are on display at the *Universal Exposition*, which has an entire section dedicated to Impressionism. The Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh buys one of Pissarro's paintings of Rouen. Durand-Ruel buys a significant proportion of his new paintings. After a second series of the Louvre and the Jardin des Tuileries, Pissarro has exhausted his subject matter and moves to a new flat on place Dauphine on the Île de la Cité. He explores the new views in three intensive periods of work. His pictures fetch more, both in private and at public sales.
- 1901 Another solo exhibition is held at Galerie Durand-Ruel. The Staatsgalerie Stuttgart is the second museum to acquire a Pissarro. Pissarro paints several scenes of Paris, including the Louvre and the Seine bridges. In spring, he paints in Moret-sur-Loing (near Paris), where his son Georges lives. The Moret paintings are bought by Durand-Ruel's rival Bernheim-Jeune; it is the first time that Pissarro actively encourages competition between dealers, and it will not be the last. In the summer, Pissarro paints in Dieppe. At a sale of the Feydeau collection, one of his paintings fetches 10,000 Swiss francs, a very high sum in those days.
- 1902 Galerie Bernheim-Jeune holds an exhibition with works by Monet and Pissarro's series of Dieppe and Paris. Pissarro is afraid of being compared unfavourably with the more successful Monet, but the critics are well-disposed. He travels to Dieppe again to paint the harbour, hoping to have more pictures to sell to his dealers. After an exhibition of the *Société des Amis des Arts de Dieppe*, Pissarro donates one of his views of the harbour to the museum in Dieppe. In the winter, Pissarro returns to place Dauphine.
- 1903 Pissarro remains in Paris into May and completes 27 paintings. It is the most fruitful period of his career. Sales, however, remain sluggish. At the auction of Zola's estate in March, paintings by Pissarro and Cézanne create a small scandal. Pissarro moves to Quai Voltaire to start work on a new series of the Left Bank. He spends the summer in Le Havre, where he talks to local artlovers and sells two paintings to the city museum. Lucien expresses the desire to return to Éragny. Pissarro moves to yet another Paris flat, but falls seriously ill before he can start work on a new series. On 13 November, Pissarro dies of a prostate abscess at the age of 73. He is buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery.