

# CONDITION REPORT

**Reported by:** Ruwadzano Rusike (RSKR UW001)

**Date:** 8 April and 15 April 2016

**Storage Location:** 6A Painting File No. 2/1/1



## Stanley Pinker

Artist on a tightrope in a prickly landscape, 1974

## Oil and sand on canvas

76.5 x 92cm

## **Brief history about the artist and artwork**

### **Biography of artist**

Stanley Pinker born 1924, Windhoek, Namibia and died in 2012, Cape Town.

Moving away from Windhoek at the age of six, Pinker left with an ongoing struggle about his identity rooted in the particular landscape which he grew up in, however naturally he continued to look elsewhere for reference as to who he was and how he imagined himself within the landscape of South Africa (Stevenson, M., 2004: 13). Studying under Maurice van Essche in Cape Town for about three years before his departure to Europe, Pinker's work like his teacher or his contemporary Walter Battiss, "applied modern pictorial principles into his work in search of creating a specific type of easel painting that would successfully blend his formal concerns with a specifically African-if not South African-content" (Hayden, P., 2004:9). In order to understand the content of his pictures one must understand the fact that most of Pinker's work was drawn deeply upon the resources of wide art historical and stylistic precedent on one hand, and upon nature itself on the other hand. Therefore like most figurative artist living in the post-1945 era, he had to digest and come to terms with the revolutionary, evolving and longer-term pictorial implications of Cubism and Fauvism (Hayden, P., 2004:7). His handling of space in his images were shallow and often tactile, a quality achieved by the highly subtle use of textures achieved by mixing sand into his painting (Hayden, P., 2004:9). The frames which occupy most of his paintings "are generally intergrated and almost coeval with the shallow space he created within the individual works, therefore making them part of the very fabric and density of his art" (Hayden, P., 2004:9). Although Pinker "is to cite a recent critic, 'a brilliant diagnostician whose political prognoses go right to the nub of the South African predicament', he remains a somewhat peripheral figure. Thus although he is not recognised for his achievements, perhaps because of his personality "an inherently shy by dedicated practitioner of the art of painting" (Hayden, P., 2004:9;10). He chose for his path the structured environment of Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town, where he became Senior Lecturer in painting.

### **Artwork Background**

"Artist on a tightrope in a prickly landscape, 1974", was originally titled "Prickly landscape with the artist poised for a fall" (Pinker, S., 2004:52). Pinker uses the line across the painting to suggest the Tropic of Capricorn, and many of the details to situate the painting into the landscape of South Africa. The greeny-brown void is textured with sand and serves as a backdrop for many little invented and sometimes humorous symbols. There is a protea with black, brown and white legs, there is the storm and a ghost-like figure, there are cacti and with prickly spines, aloe leaves with serrated edges, large acacia thorns, a porcupine quill, scorpions, a hedgehog, a centipede... There is a clack jack-in-the-

box wearing horns and an old South African flag; a man formally dressed in black, with top hat and touches of the organe, blue and white precariously balances on a tightrope, and the colours of the old South African appear in the prosaic sterlizia. Ahodgepodge reflecting the fraught landscape of the times. The surround serves a similar function to the borders in Indian miniatures (Pinker, S., 2004:52)

H. Proud, 'Reflection on the Art of Stanley Pinker', *Stanley Pinker*, (Cape Town, 2004)  
M. Stevenson, 'Interview with Stanley Pinker', *Stanley Pinker*, (Cape Town, 2004)

## A. ARTWORK IDENTIFICATION DETAILS

### COLLECTION

IZIKO South African National Gallery, Permanent Collection

### ARTIST

Stanley Pinker

### TITLE

Artist on a tightrope in a prickly landscape

The title has documented by the collector **Prickly landscape with the artist poised for a fall** which was the original title

### DATE

1974

### SIGNATURE



Located bottom left of the painting in black oil paint

### ACCESSION NUMBER

74/22

### DIMENSIONS

76.5 x 92cm

### FRAME

Wooden frame is attached to painting by nails and the painting continuous onto the frame. Made by the artist.



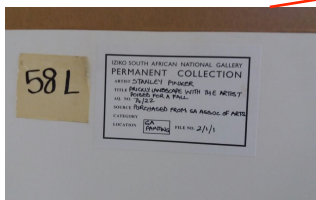
## ARTWORK IDENTIFICATION DETAILS VISUAL PICTORIAL AID



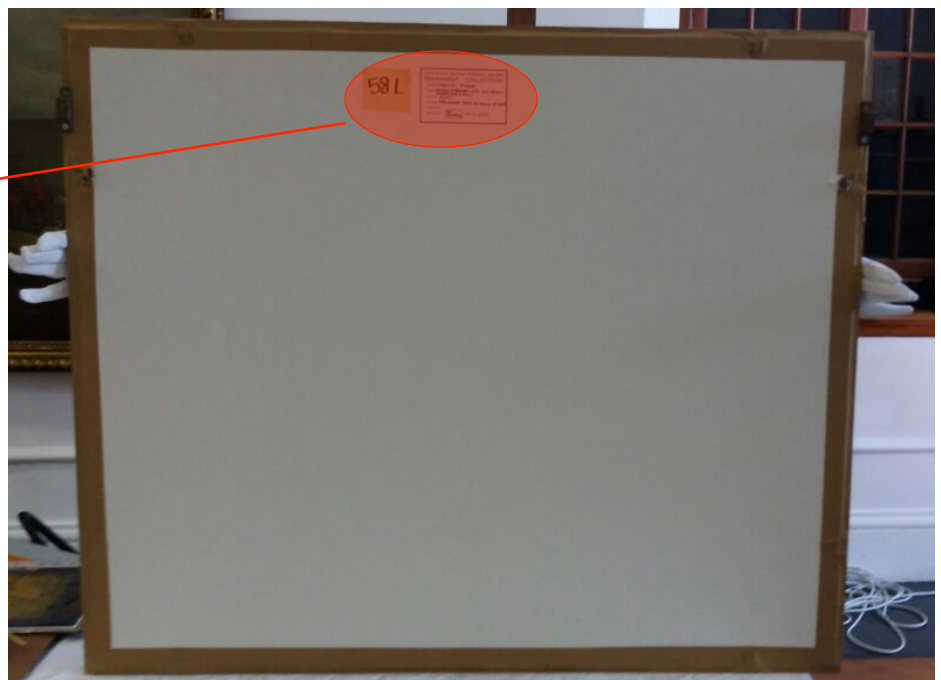
Artist Signature



Whole front, showing the location of artist signature



Label



Whole back, including label location

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**CONDITION REPORT – Easel Paintings**
**Artist:** Stanley Pinker

**Title:** Artist on a tightrope in a prickly landscape

**Medium:** oil and sand on canvas

**Acc No:** 74/22

**► PAINTING SUPPORT**
☒ Canvas

☐ Panel

☐ Other

**Surface Plane**
☒ Free of distortion

☐ Corner distortions

☐ Distortions due to cupping

☐ Localized distortions

☐ General distortions

**Tension**
☒ Adequate

☐ Slack

☐ Tight

☐ Canvas can contract

**Tears/Splits**
☒ None apparent

☐ Yes

**Secondary support**
☒ Stretcher

☐ Other

**Notes**


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**► PAINT FILMS**
☒ Oil

☒ Other

**Crack Patterns**
☒ None apparent

☐ Drying cracks

☐ Raised edges

☐ Localized

☐ Age cracks

**Cleavage/Flaking**
☒ None apparent

☐ Yes

**Losses**
☒ None apparent

☐ None recent

☐ Yes

**Notes** Paint films includes that of sand.
 

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**► SURFACE**
☐ Varnished

☒ Unvarnished

**Dirt**
☐ Minimal

☒ Visible

☐ Heavy soiling

**Appearance**
☒ Acceptable

☐ Slightly discoloured

☐ Disturbing

☐ Scratchy/scuff marks

☐ Other

**► FRAME**

- ☐ Exhibition frame
- ☐ Carved/gilded
- ☐ Molded/gilded/painted

**Rigidity**

- ☒ Adequate
- ☐ Inadequate

**Disjoins/Splits**

- ☐ None apparent
- ☐ None recent
- ☒ Yes
- ☐ Mitres open

**Glazing**

- ☒ None
- ☐ Glass
- ☐ Perspex

**Cleavage/Flaking**

- ☒ None apparent
- ☐ Yes

**Backboard**

- ☐ None
- ☒ Board
- ☐ Foam core
- ☐ Hardboard

**Fitting**

- ☒ Nails
- ☐ Plates

**Gilding and Paint Losses**

- ☐ None apparent
- ☐ None recent
- ☒ Yes

**Structural Losses**

- ☐ None apparent
- ☐ None recent
- ☒ Yes

**► Notes**

SEE DOCUMENT ATTACHED

**Location of Damages**

SEE DOCUMENT ATTACHED

Examined by:

**Ruwadzano Rusike**

Signature:

Date:

**15 April 2016**



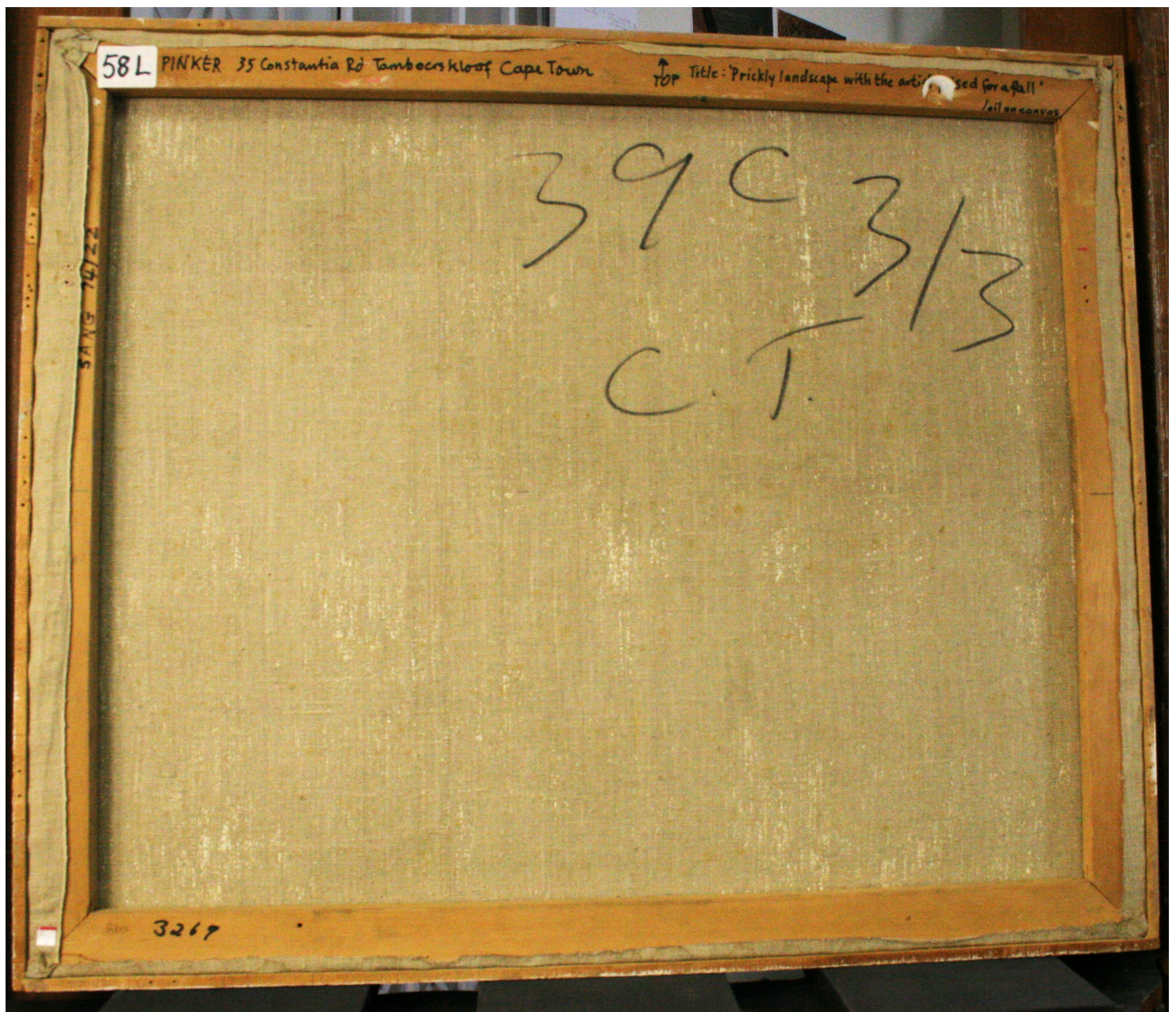
## B. SECONDARY SUPPORT

Description:

This is a 4 member mortise and tenon stretcher, where all 8 expansions keys are missing.

The number of members and their dimensions are 5 x 2cm. The general condition is good.

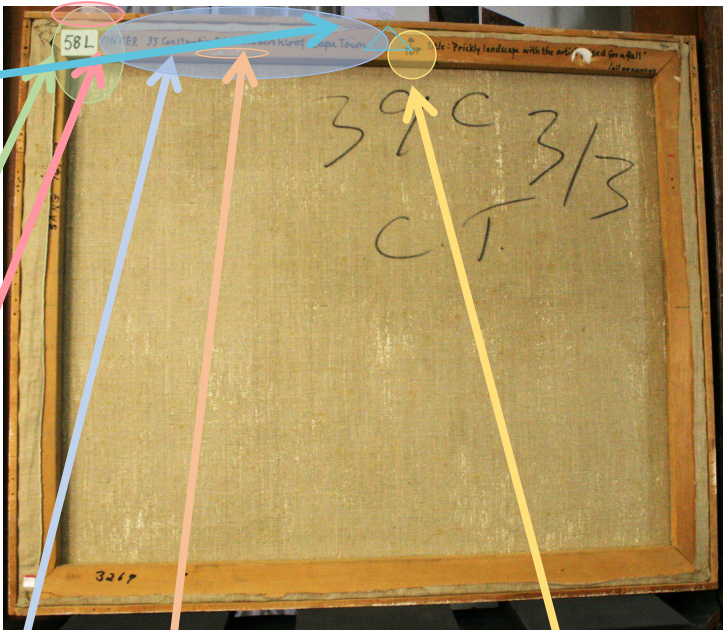
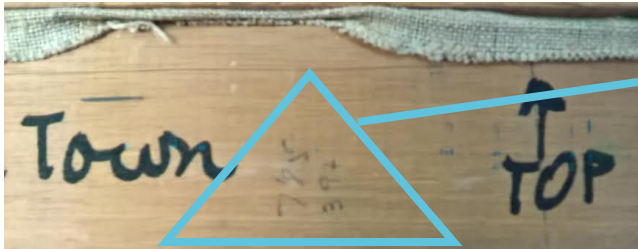
The following inscriptions that can be seen have been highlighted and described in the following diagrams



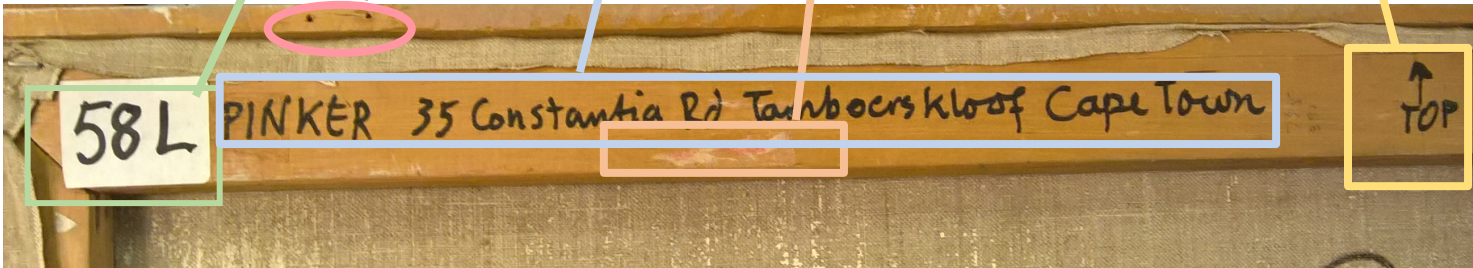
Whole back, after backing board removed



Top right of canvas with board removed



Mesurments indicating artist  
artist made canvas frame



Lable location before  
application of backing board

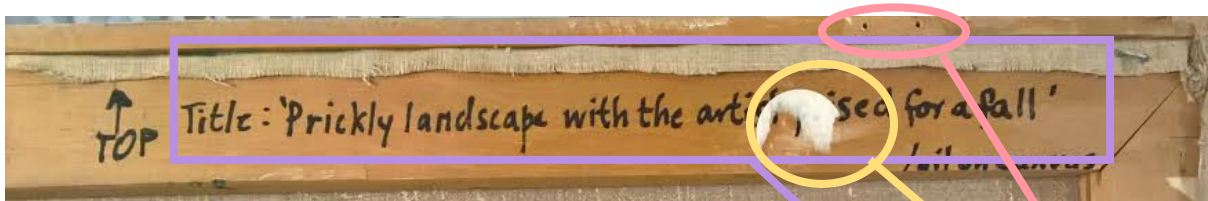
Artist home address

Mark indicating direction  
artwork is to be viewed

Punctures in wood where nails  
have been placed and then  
removed at different stages

Removed unknown lable

Top left of canvas with board removed and bottom half and right hand parallel side of the canvas

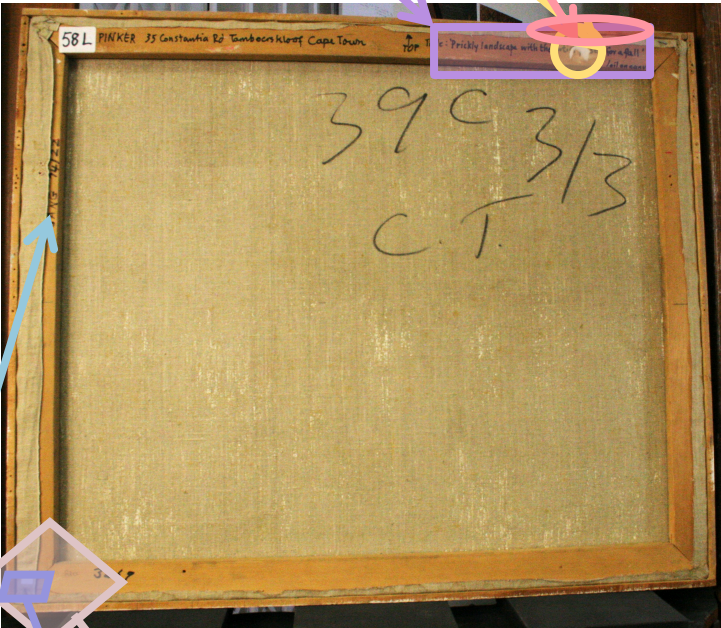


Title and medium of artwork. Indicating that the medium of sand added could like the title have been added at a different stage as an after thought once original artwork was created

Mark indicating direction artwork is to be viewed

Punctures in wood where nails have been placed and then removed at different stages

Collection mark SANG  
74/22



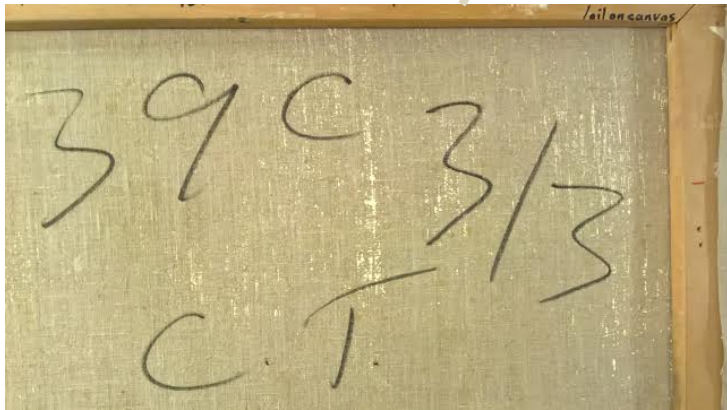
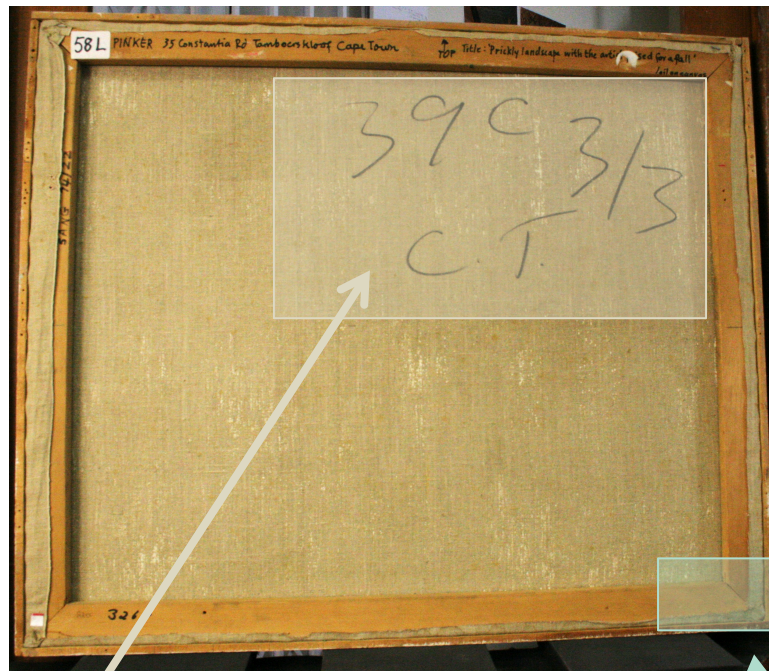
Unknown label probably by the collector

Wood price in R200 and 3269





## Whole back of canvas



Collection mark 39c 3/3 C.T.

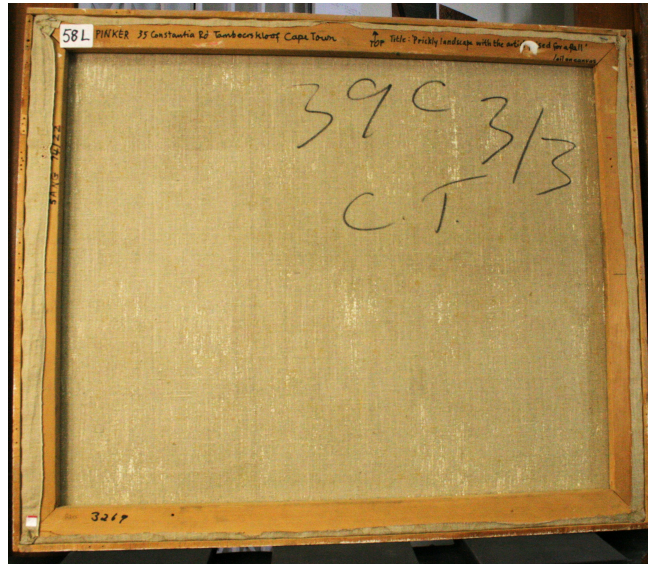


Not joined bottom left corner

**NOTE: Due to the number of collection marks it must be noted that 58L is the current collection lable**

### C. PRIMARY SUPPORT

The primary support is a . It is a hand made canvas by the artist , as the ground extends to the tacking margins unevenly.



Close up highlighting tacking margins uneven distribution indicating that it was stretched by the artist

The condition of both the primary and lining canvas appear to be in a sound condition. A deformation extending from the upper right along the right edge indicates that the painting was made before it was stretched. Moreover, a selvedge along the middle right side of the canvas. Indicating that the canvas was stretched by the artist



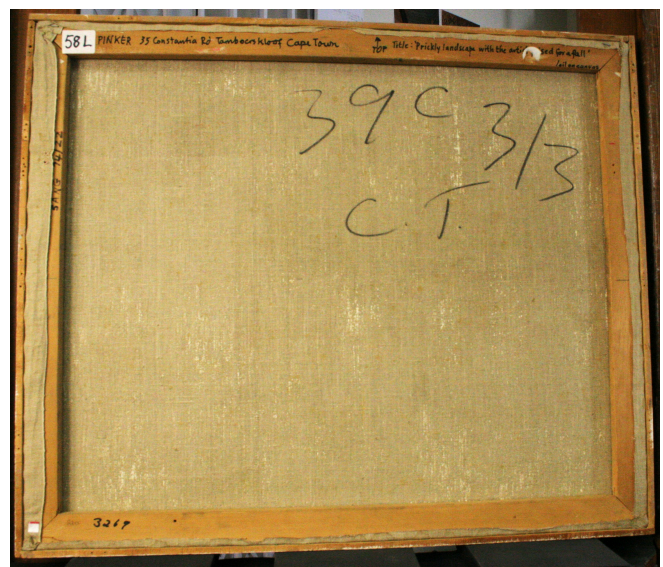
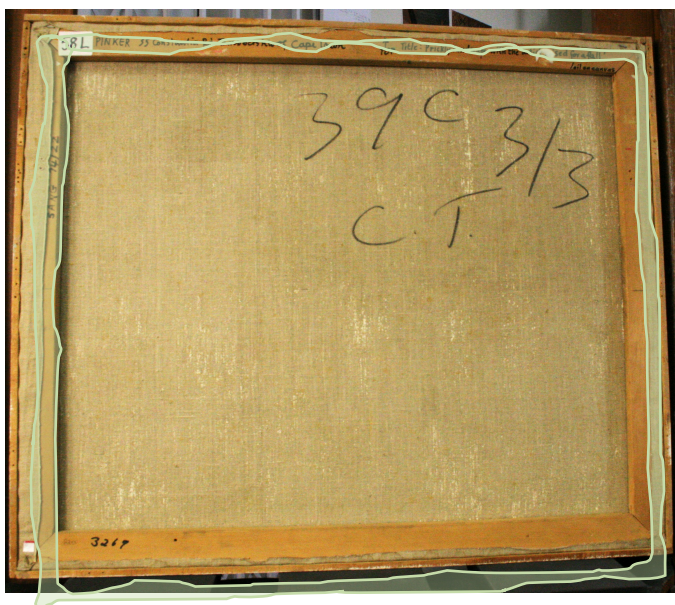
Close up showing stretching of canvas once painting was created (Top left of painting)



The threadcount per square: 12 vertical threads, 12 horizontal threads. The horizontal threads reveal slubs. Because of this as well as the greater spread of the horizontal threads, it may be assumed that the wrap threads run vertically, which is confirmed by the presence of the selvedge along the right edge.



Close up indicating threadcount



Uneven distribution of canvas indicating that it was streeched by the artist

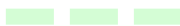
## D. GROUND



Frame Damage



Masking tape damage



Frame damage



**NOTE: ALL OF THIS WILL BE EXPLAINED IN THE FOLLOWING EXPLANATIONS**

### PRIMARY SUPPORT

#### The type of fabric used

medium-weight single piece tabby weave linen canvas that the artist stretched by himself leaving holes in the canvas as it shrank when the primary layer of paint was applied.



**IMAGINE CLOSE UP INDICATING MARKS LEFT BY THE  
CANVAS**

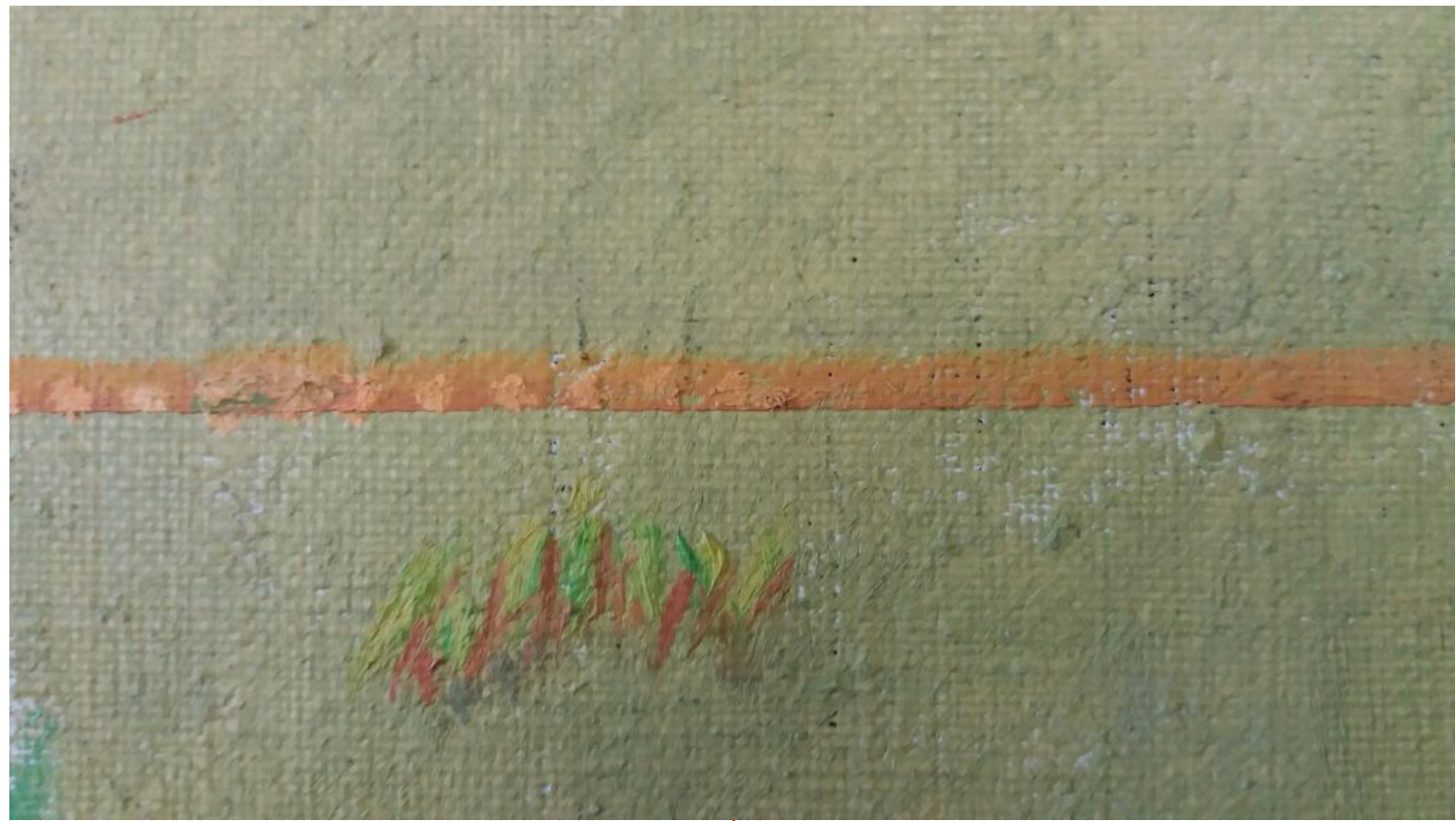


Close up of the canvas showing the weave and weft



Micrograph x 6.4 magnified





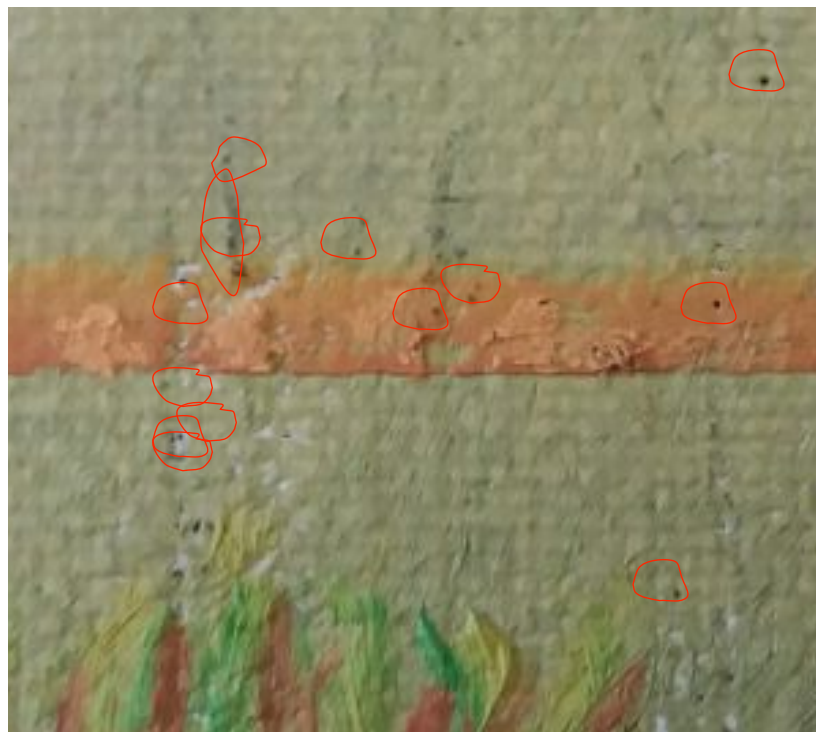
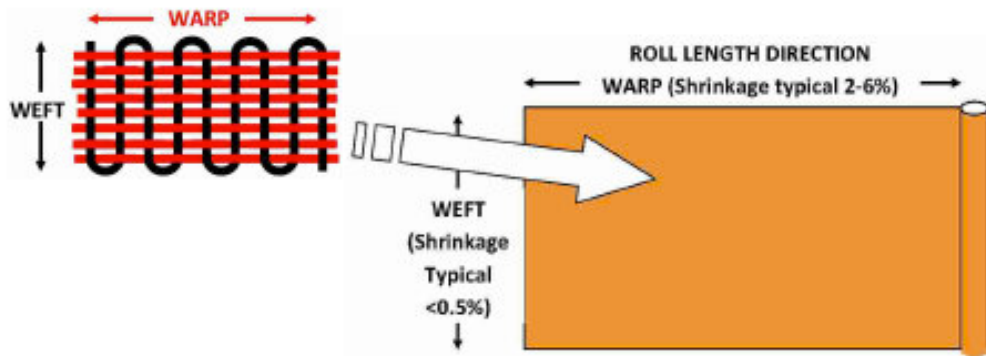
Micrograph x 6.4 magnified close up unhighlighted



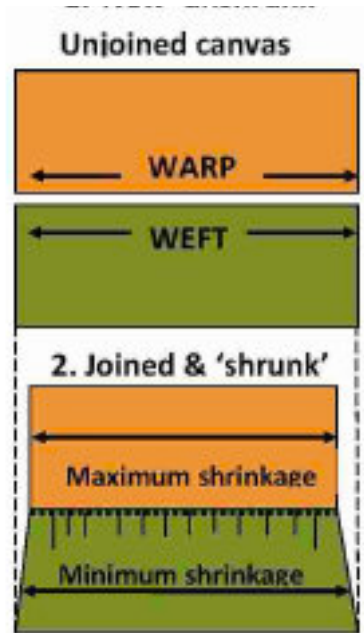


### Canvas Shrinking:

- Fresh new cotton/polyester blend & cotton canvas WILL shrink when exposed to moisture or rain for the first few times.
- 'WARP' SHRINKAGE:- ('Warp' is the lengthwise or longitudinal thread in a roll)
  - 50/50 Cotton/Polyester canvas :--Typically in the region of 2-3% maximum (20-30mm per metre!!!)
  - 100% Cotton canvas:-----Typically in the region of 5-6% maximum (50-60mm per metre!!!)
- 'WEFT' SHRINKAGE:- ('Weft' is the 'weaving' thread across the width of the roll)  
Typically <0.5% (<5mm per metre)



Close up highlighting some areas of the painting and the shrinking affects



### Shrinkage Issues:

During the spinning and weaving of artist canvas production, stresses are placed on the canvas fiber that stretch them beyond their natural dimensions. When we (during sizing or priming), the canvas reverts to its natural state by pulling back to the relaxed fiber dimensions (it shrinks). The term “shrink” in a woven canvas refers to the ability of the fibers to return to their normal relaxed state when subjected to moisture. It is the potential shrink in an artist canvas that keeps it taut on the stretcher frame through constant changes in temperature and humidity.

Therefore hinder the canvas capability to preserve the fiber's flexibility and stops the canvas from going brittle. Thus because unlike linen cotton is not regarded as having a more 'natural' weaved finish. Pinker's prime layer is in fact the green layer that we see therefore the canvas has not had the ability to fully return back to its relaxed fiber dimension but is not instead returning to that.

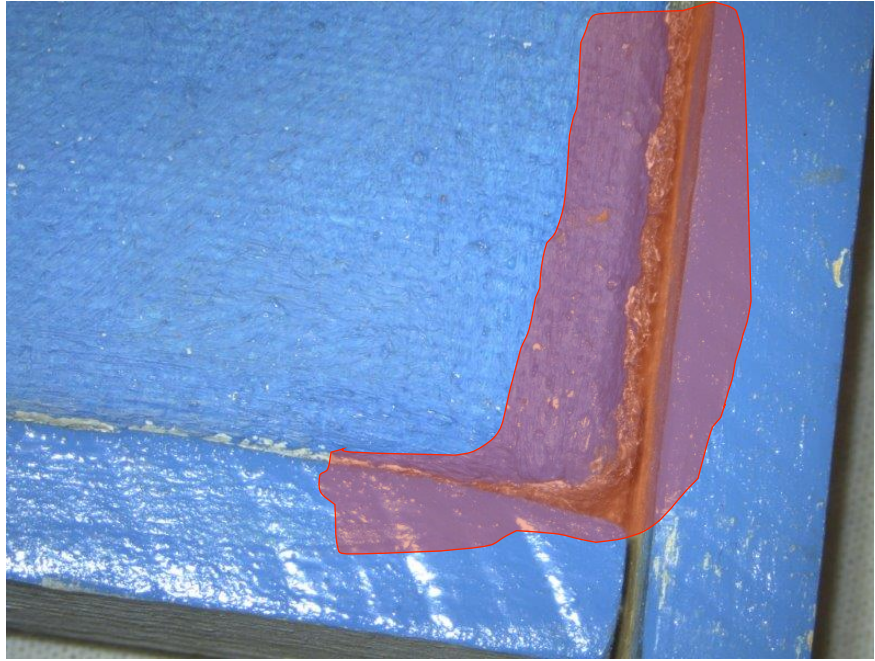
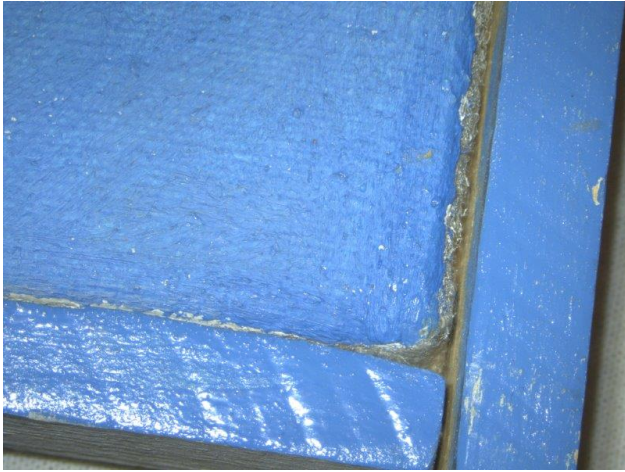
## FRAME



Close up highlighting paint loss

The dust that has been gathering throughout the frame in pinkers work highlights how dust when hydroscopic can ultimately cause paint loss





This can also be because the paint used for the frame and the paint used for the painting differ therefore one can argue that the inpainting at the points where the canvas and paint met has caused this.

Due to Pinkers quest to produce everything by himself the mitre joint has not been connected properly causing a dent at the bottom left of the painting. **Therefore making the bottom left corner of the painting pressure sensitive due to the trauma that may have occurred.**





There are a number of different places where the frame has encountered losses as identified by the images. All of these sites of losses all occur at on the right hand side of the painting therefore indicating that either the painting was mishandelled and collapsed on its right hand side. (Indicated in the diagram)



## GROUND

On the surface of the painting if one were to examine

## PAINT LAYER

Artwork under Ultraviolet Fluorescence



Whole front, ultra violet light

*Organic compounds can easily be detected under UV light. This effective tool detects later restorations that appear darker than the aged original varnish layers. UVF can reveal the presence of natural resin varnishes, as these often fluoresce under UV light. It is also possible to identify any retouchings on top of an aged varnish, since oil paint and newer varnish do not fluoresce under UV. Retouchings therefore appear as dark patches on the varnish surface.*

Thus one can determine by looking at Pinker's work that the light that is reelected black especially in what appears to be the boarder of of the painting which is reflected back to us as the fluroscene appears to be added later onto the image.

One can also obseve through closer observation that the artist added the boarder after he had completed the artwork as the underlayer of an object penetrates though the painted layer of the boarder as highlighted in the diagram below. Which is supported by the varying degrees of colour



Close up highlighting composition alteration by the artist



Close up highlighting composition alteration by the artist

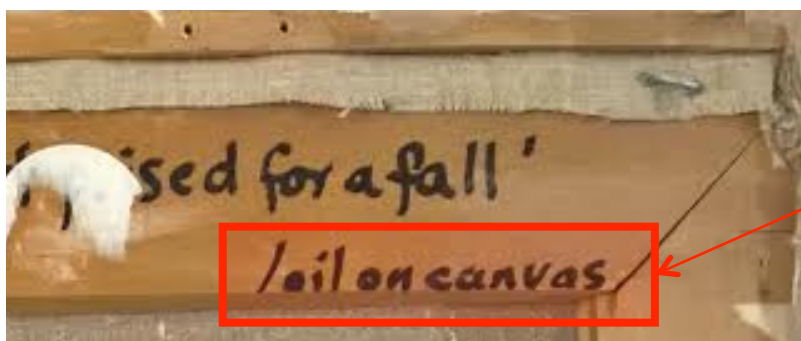


In other areas of the painting one can observe that the artist later when to review the artwork which is again supported by the varying degrees of paint that appears in the artwork. When one looks at what is now known as *Artist on a tightrope in a prickly landscape* mabe the unpainted layer was infact *Prickly landscape with the artist poised for a fall.*



Juxtaposition of images highlighting composition alteration by the artist

Therefore because the degree of penetration depends on the thickness of the paint, the type of paint used and the length of the wave of infrared radiation. Would explain why under UV light one cannot see as much evidence as one would like of sand as a material component in the painting. Thus one can come to the conclusion that like the title the use of the sand was an after thought as it does not firstly appear as a fetured medium on the back of the painting.



Close up highlighting medium of painting as oil on canvas

Close up highlighting medium of artwork



## PAINT LAYER

Artwork under Raking light



Detail, raking light, showing the texture of both the canvas and sand

Raking light is a technique in which a painting is illuminated from one side only, at an oblique angle in relation to its surface. This technique reveals a painting surface texture. Raised paint surfaces facing the light are illuminated, while those facing away create shadows.

The increased appearance of paint texture that can easily be seen in the image supports the fact that Pinker did in fact use sand when doing this image but not as much in comparison to his other works.