



### Achille Laugé

(1861-1944)

#### Road with Broom

(La route aux genêts)

c. 1900

undated

signed bottom right: "A. Laugé"

Mixed media (wax, oil) on canvas

h 53.9 cm x b 72.5 cm

WRM Dep. FC 759





## Brief Report

For the Pointillist painting *Road with Broom* Laugé used a standard P20 canvas which was given a white ground after stretching. On the surface, the artist first used charcoal to draw a detailed diagonal and orthogonal orientation grid of a kind seldom noted anywhere else; it can be made clearly visible with the help of infra-red radiation (figs 7-9). Geometrically identical grids can be found in many of Laugé's extant drawings [Laugé 1990, pp 73-75] (fig. 13). In the history of art, line constructions of this kind are known from theory and from analyses of pictures, for example in the drawings of Claude Lorrain, Balthus and Jan Atlink [von Saint-George/Schaefer 2008, pp. 268-269]. In the present case, however, it is unclear whether Laugé used the grid primarily as a means of general geometric ordering, or whether it served to transfer the motif from a separate no longer extant preliminary drawing. The use of such a detailed grid seems somewhat puzzling in view of the really very simple pictorial composition of the landscape motif of a *Road with Broom*, especially since there is no part of the picture that seems actually to correspond to the lines. Be that as it may, after

laying in the grid, the artist sketched the individual elements, likewise in charcoal, in brisk, loose, searching lines. Then a blue, slightly transparent underpainting was applied to the whole surface, lending the whole painting a soft, atmospheric touch (figs 9, 10). On top of this, the artist applied the yellow and green of the fields (fig. 10). This was followed by pink, which was often applied somewhat more impasto. In a final phase, Laugé used very dry paint to apply mainly blue and yellow hues in order to modulate or give enhanced structure to certain areas of the picture. Depending on the position and the purpose of the colours in the painting, the dabs of paint were larger or smaller, so that the perspective is supported by the brushwork. Thus for example the dots in the background are very much smaller than in the foreground. Laugé worked with a mix of binding media – wax and oil – which was probably applied warm. With the particularly matt character of this material and the shimmering effect of his divisionist technique the artist has succeeded in creating the atmosphere of a sun-drenched landscape.



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## Picture support canvas

Standard format	P 20 (73.0 x 54.0 cm) horizontal
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	very even dense weave, pale in colour; 21 weft threads/23 warp threads per cm; selvage present at the bottom turnover edge
Stretching	original stretching; moderately pronounced stretchmarks along the edges are in precise accord with the tacking at intervals of app. 4 cm; the stretching largely follows the direction of the threads
Stretcher/strainer	strainer (Fr. <i>chassis ordinaire</i> ); the lap joints at the corners are secured by a number of nails; vertical centre bar (fig. 2)
Stretcher/strainer depth	1.3 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	industrially produced; bars chamfered on the outside
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	none present



## Ground

Sizing	none present
Colour	white (fig. 12)
Application	ground applied after cutting-to-size and stretching; two layers; towards the edges the ground becomes irregular, suggesting it was applied manually by the artist himself
Binding medium	1) bottom layer: zinc white in a proteinaceous binding medium with small additions of oil [FTIR]; 2) top layer: the same, with an additional siliceous filler: calcium silicate(?) [FTIR]
Texture	very thin, even and homogeneous ground; moderately porous, many bubbles

## Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	two stages of pictorial planning can be determined (figs 7, 8): 1.) symmetrical grid of auxiliary lines in anthracite-to-black charcoal applied using a soft broad stick 2.) charcoal drawing of the major pictorial elements; powdery, fibrous abrasion
Extent/character	1.) unusually detailed grid of orthogonal and diagonal lines, so that a division into rectangles, triangles and rhombi is created; the sides of the rectangles are in the proportion 2:3; the distance between the top and bottom edges of the grid from the edges of the picture is striking (fig. 7) 2.) underdrawing of the few pictorial motifs with very brisk, short strokes; in some cases restless, searching lineation (fig. 7); the loose charcoal particles have in places been spread into the paint-layer by the subsequent application of paint (fig. 8)
Pentimenti	–



## Paint layer

### Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

pale blue, semi-transparent underpainting over the whole surface, which especially in the region of the sky is strongly integrated into the final effect of the picture: thin, homogeneous, and binder-rich layer with not much pigment, applied very wet (fig. 9); further fluid and binder-rich blocks of colour in yellow and green were likewise applied (fig. 10), while the overlying dabs of paint in the divisionist technique are far stronger, more clearly defined and more impasto, and have a higher proportion of pigment; the paints were in places only coarsely mixed with the brush on the palette, so that the different hues can sometimes be clearly seen in the brushwork

### Painting tools

bristle brushes, predominantly fine and narrow for the application of the colour dots; for the larger blocks of colour, especially in the sky, broader bristle-brushes were used to spread out the paint, leaving a groove-like structure in places (fig. 11)

### Surface structure

brushwork everywhere visible, fragmented and impasto, however presumably because of the binding medium mostly soft and flowing (figs 3, 11)

### Palette

visual microscopic inspection reveals: white, medium yellow, pale red, red lake, medium green, pale blue, medium blue; the colours mostly have a high proportion of white mixed in, but no mixtures of the hues themselves is discernible;  
VIS spectrometry: chrome yellow(?)/ cadmium yellow(?), zinc yellow(?), vermilion(?), viridian(?), ultramarine blue;  
FTIR-analysis: zinc white, cobalt blue, artificial ultramarine, siliceous filler (calcium silicate?)

### Binding mediums

mixture of wax (beeswax?), zinc stearate and oil [FTIR and micro-chemical analysis]; on the basis of the analyses and extensive painterly reconstruction, we may presume that the paints were applied warm and were possibly diluted with a solvent (e.g. turpentine) to achieve the desired layer thickness



## Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition	currently varnished with a transparent waxy coating [FTIR and microchemical analysis]; authenticity uncertain, but the binding medium shows similarities with the binding medium of the paint-layer
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## Signature/Mark

When?	handwritten signature “A. Laugé” applied with a brush to the dry paint-layer; no more precise indication of the time is possible (fig. 6)
Autograph signature	the handwriting displays significant agreement with known autograph signatures by Laugé
Serial	–

## Frame

Authenticity	not original
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## State of preservation

Canvas is deformed and bulging in places (fig. 3); paint-layer has obvious craquelure; in the course of a restoration, the lines of the grid of the underdrawing were retouched where they showed through the paint-layer in places, thus covering over the traces of the picture’s evolution (figs 4, 5).



### Additional remarks

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### Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhib. cat. Cologne Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, 8 September - 9. December 2001), Cologne 2001, cat. no. 72, p. 177 with ill.
- Laugé 1990: *Achille Laugé. 1861-1944. Portraits pointillistes* (exhib. cat. Saint Tropez, Musée de l'Annonciade, 7 April - 11 June 1990, Carcassonne, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 20 June - 31 Auguste 1990), Saint Tropez, Carcassonne, 1990
- Von Saint-George/ Schaefer 2008: Caroline von Saint-George, Iris Schaefer, "Bildplanung und Unterzeichnung von Gemälden der Impressionisten und Postimpressionisten aus der Sammlung des Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud", in: *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, no. 2 (2008), 261-273

### Source of illustrations

Fig. 13 Musée de Beaux-Arts de Carcassonne

All further illustrations and figures: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud





### Examination methods used

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ✓ Incident light                       | ✓ VIS spectrometry                       |
| ✓ Raking light                         | – Wood identification                    |
| – Reflected light                      | ✓ FTIR (Fourier transform spectroscopy)  |
| ✓ Transmitted light                    | – EDX (Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis) |
| ✓ Ultraviolet fluorescence             | ✓ Microchemical analysis                 |
| ✓ Infrared reflectography              |  |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography |  |
| – X-ray                                |  |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy                     |  |

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Author of brief report:	Hans Portsteffen

Date: 03/2007

Date: 12/2008





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Fig. 1  
Recto



Fig. 2  
Verso







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Fig. 3  
Raking light



Fig. 4  
Transmitted light





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Fig. 5  
UV fluorescence

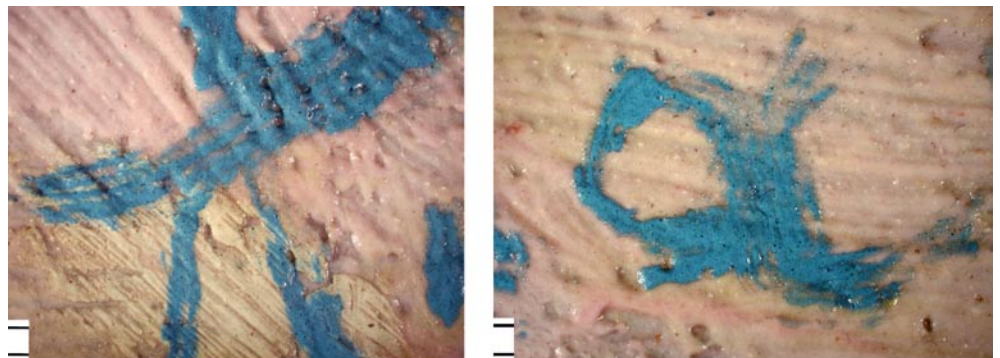


Fig. 6  
Signature added after  
paint-layers had dried,  
microscopic photographs  
(M = 1 mm)





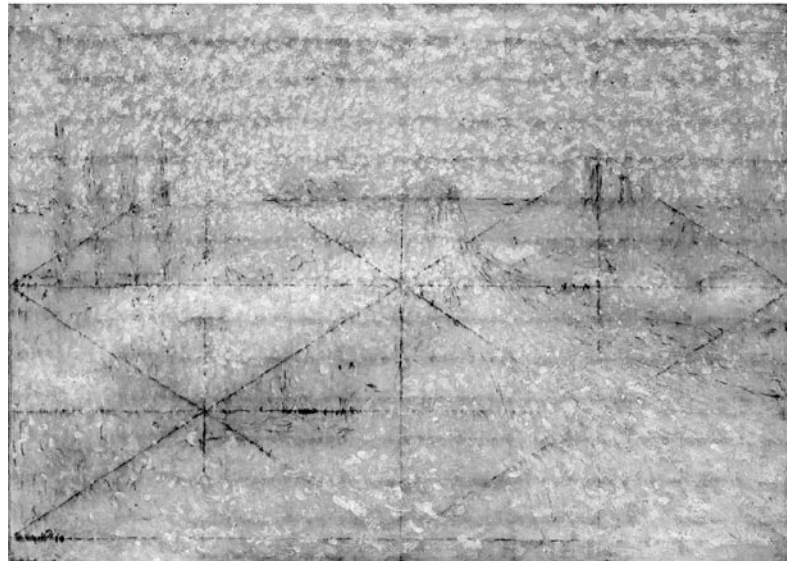
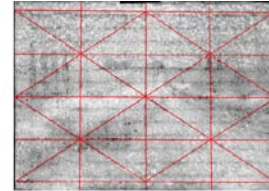


Fig. 7  
IR reflectogram showing  
the grid of orthogonal  
and diagonal lines,  
reconstruction of the  
complete grid top right  
in red



Fig. 8  
Anthracite to black lines  
of the underdrawing,  
presumably in charcoal,  
microscopic photographs  
(M = 1 mm)





Fig. 9

Detail, beneath the dabs of paint the pale blue underpainting is visible, in addition one can see a diagonal line from the underdrawn grid



Fig. 10

Detail, the sequence of paint applications began with the pale-blue underpainting, followed by the yellow colour blocks and finally the pink, blue and yellow dots and dabs, mostly added after the underlying layer had dried

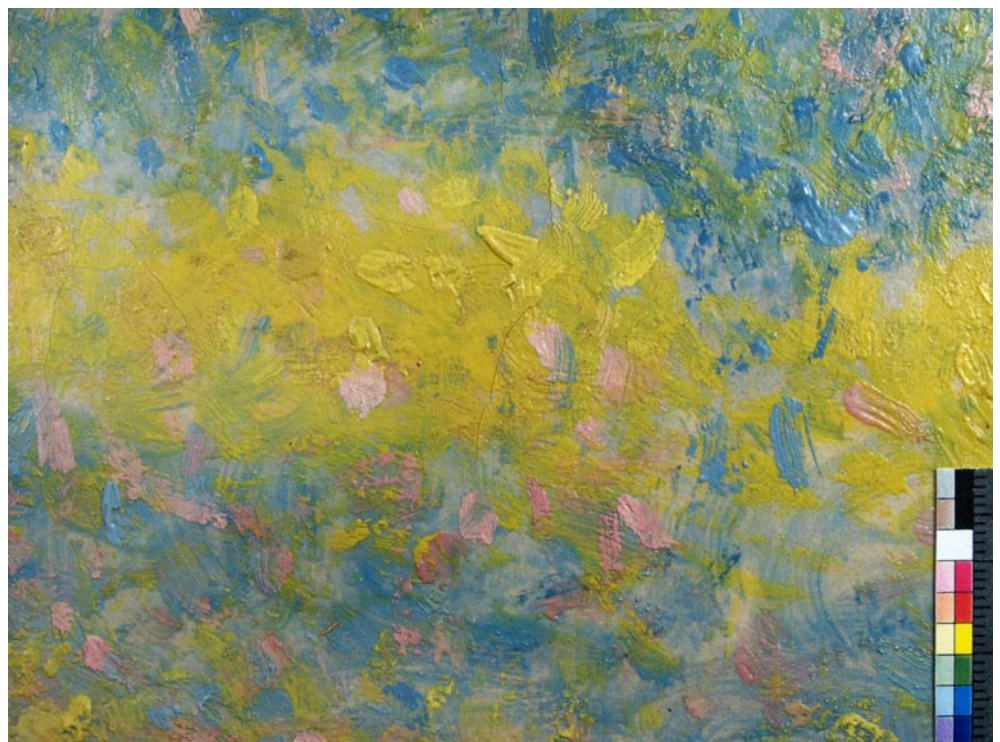






Fig. 11  
Detail under raking  
light, surface structure  
with visible brushwork  
and soft flow of paint  
presumably due to the  
high proportion of wax  
in the binding agent



Fig. 12  
Waxy paint layers and  
conspicuous pigmen-  
tation, microscopic photo-  
graph (M = 1 mm)





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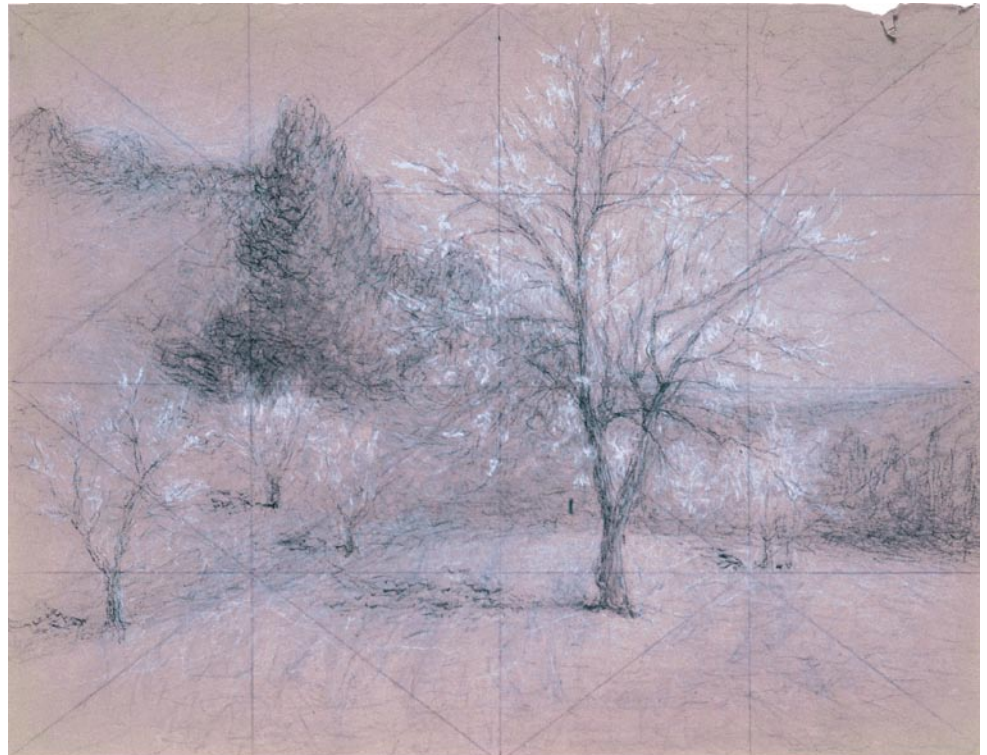


Fig. 13  
Achille Laugé, *Orchard at Alet*, n.d., charcoal, pencil  
and white chalk on grey  
paper, 25 x 32 cm