



Maximilien Luce
(1858-1941)

Saint-Tropez

1892

*signed, dated and identified bottom left:
"Luce 92 / St Tropez"*

Oil on cardboard

h 26.0 cm x b 39.8 cm

WRM Dep. FC 773





Brief Report

Maximilien Luce was strongly influenced by Signac, Pissarro and Seurat, and evolved to become one of the leading Neo-impressionist artists [Budde/Schaefer 2001, p. 226]. This small painting on an artists' board close to the standard P6 format, depicting a coastal motif at Saint Tropez, illustrates his pointillist technique of the 1890s very clearly. The board is unprimed, and can be seen in many places which have been left free of paint. Heavy browning of the board, intensified further by a non-authentic coat of varnish, has today produced a conspicuous contrast between the bright paints and the picture support itself. This is especially noticeable in the peripheral regions to the left and right, and also in the foreground (figs 8, 9, 10).

There are no hints of any composition planning in the form of either drawing or painting. The paints are opaque throughout, and their application, in the complementary pairs blue/yellow-orange and green/red-violet, while wet-in-wet in places, was predominantly wet-on-dry (fig. 8). The individual strokes and dabs, often curved, are often oriented to the individual motif. The signature, with the date and location, was only added when the painting was finished (fig. 6). Verso there are areas of paint applied in no particular direction probably by the artist himself, using both a brush and a palette knife; there is also a handwritten calculation, albeit largely illegible (fig. 2).



Picture support board

Standard format	close to P6 (41.0 x 27.0 cm), horizontal
Thickness	2.5-3.0 mm
Characteristics	couched board consisting of fine, non-directional fibres; the latter are relatively long and vary in colour, their material cannot be determined; the layers are heavily compressed into each other, consequently their number cannot be determined (fig. 7)
Colour	greyish-brown
Manufacture/modification	presumably industrially produced millboard
Producer's/dealer's marks	none visible, the board being covered with paint on both sides

Ground

Sizing	undetermined
Colour	unprimed
Application	—
Binding medium	—
Character and appearance	—



Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	–
Extent/character	there are no hints either under the microscope or using IR reflectography of any compositional planning either in paint or in the form of drawing
Pentimenti	–

Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision	paint application viscous and opaque throughout, partly wet-in-wet, partly wet-on-dry; on the left and right edges of the picture the brushstrokes are very dry and the unprimed and now darkened board is visible in many places; the short, often curved brushstrokes or dabs are predominantly diagonal, but also follow the lines of the respective motif (in the sky crosswise in places, in the sea horizontal, in bushes and the tree both vertically upwards and non-directional) (fig. 3); the paints were in some cases mixed on the palette before application, but not homogeneously (e.g. whitish-pink strokes in the tree-trunk) (fig. 9); verso there is a coat of pale violet, orange-yellow and individual strokes of dark-blue and red, presumably applied by the artist himself with a palette knife and a brush (fig. 2)
Painting tools	fine, tongue-shaped flat-ferrule brushes of varying width; breadth of stroke predominantly between 0.2-0.6 cm (figs 8, 9, 10, 11)
Surface structure	white or white blends evince marked pastosity (fig. 3), otherwise the paint applications reveal the brushwork clearly, and have plenty of body
Palette	microscopic visual inspection reveals: white, yellow-orange, orange-red, red lake (pink UV fluorescence, figs 9, 12), violet, dark blue-green, pale green, medium green, dark green VIS spectrometry: cadmium(?)/chrome(?) yellow, vermillion(?), rose madder(?), cobalt violet, cerulean blue, cobalt blue, ultramarine blue(?), copper-based green
Binding mediums	presumably oil



Surface finish

Authenticity/condition	present varnish not original and very glossy, remains of an older finish are discernible under UV fluorescence (fig. 12)
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Signature/Mark

When?	applied after the paint-layer had dried
Autograph signature	“Luce 92 / St Tropez” applied with a pointed brush in black paint in the bottom left-hand corner, hard to read; partially re-traced, presumably by a different hand, in a semi-transparent reddish-brown
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	not authentic
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State of preservation

Board bulges slightly; top right-hand corner knocked and deformed, minor damage to the board all round the edge, presumably due to earlier framing; the fibres of the board evince heavy browning, intensified still further by the coat of varnish; some impasto applications are slightly flattened; very little craquelure; retouching in the top corners and in the middle of the top edge, and semi-transparent reinforcement of the heavily abraded signature (fig. 6); verso remains of adhesive tape all round the edge, and of a sticker; some dripmarks.



Additional remarks

Verso on the right-hand side there is a handwritten note in the form of a calculation in lead or graphite pencil, albeit evidently partially erased.

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. 97, p. 226 with ill.

Source of illustrations

All illustrations Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud

Examination methods used

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|--|--|
| ✓ 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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Fig. 1
Recto

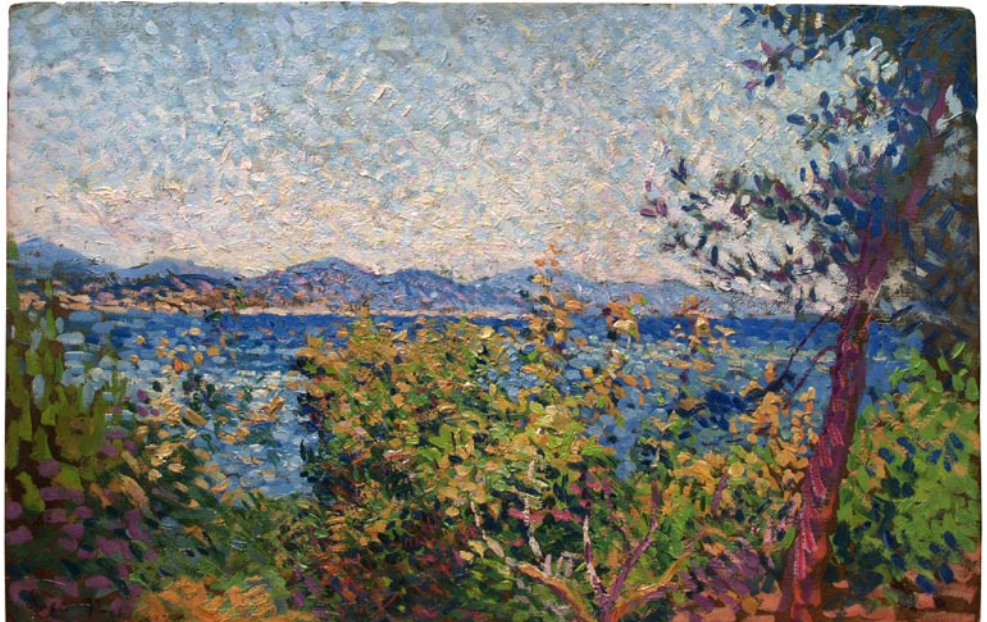


Fig. 2
Verso, with detail in
raking light (top left), the
use of a palette knife for
the application of the
paint verso is discernible

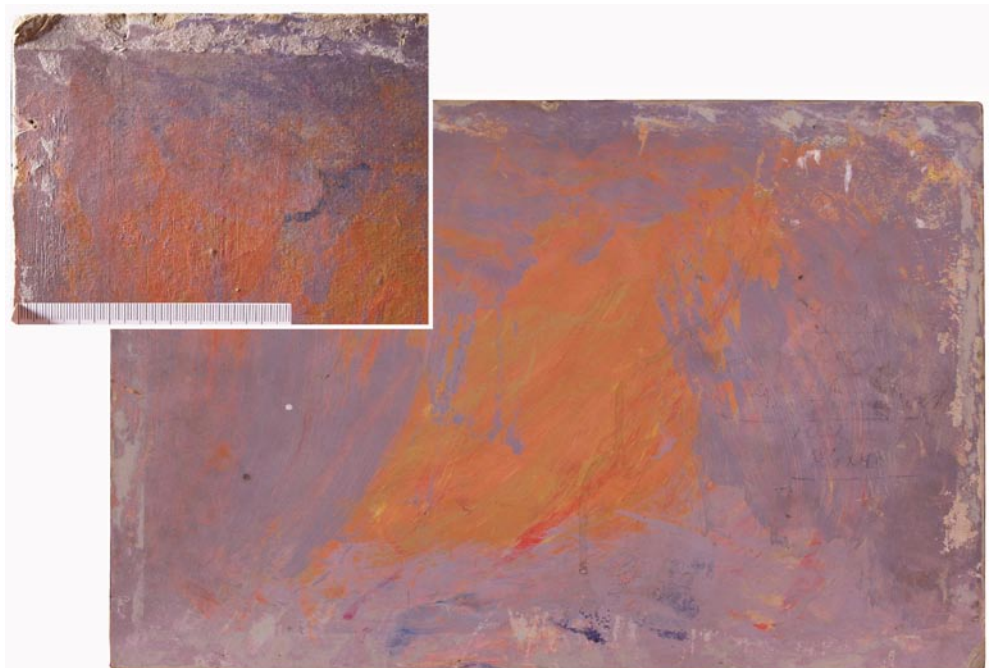




Fig. 3
Rakinglight



Fig. 4
UV fluorescence

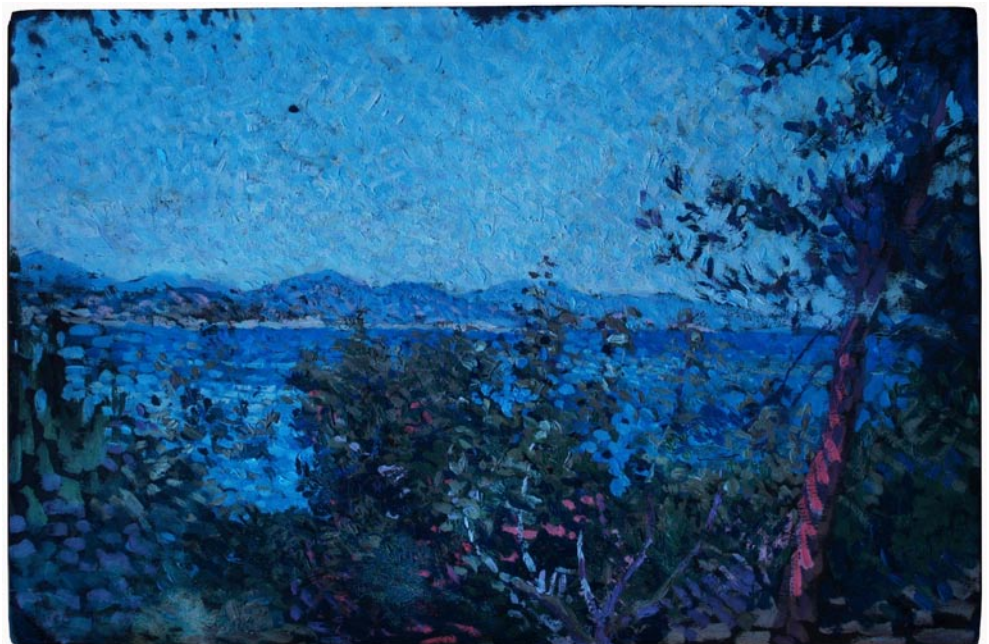




Fig. 5
UV fluorescence, verso



Fig. 6
Details, signature, date and location in incident light (top) and under UV stimulation (bottom); the microscopic photograph shows semi-transparent reinforcement of the letter "p" (arrow) (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 7

Aspects of the picture support: in a lateral view of the board (top), the fraying at one corner reveals the numerous layers; recto the heavily browned unprimed board, consisting of different fibres, can be seen where it has been left untouched by the paint applications (bottom), microscopic photographs (M = 1 mm)

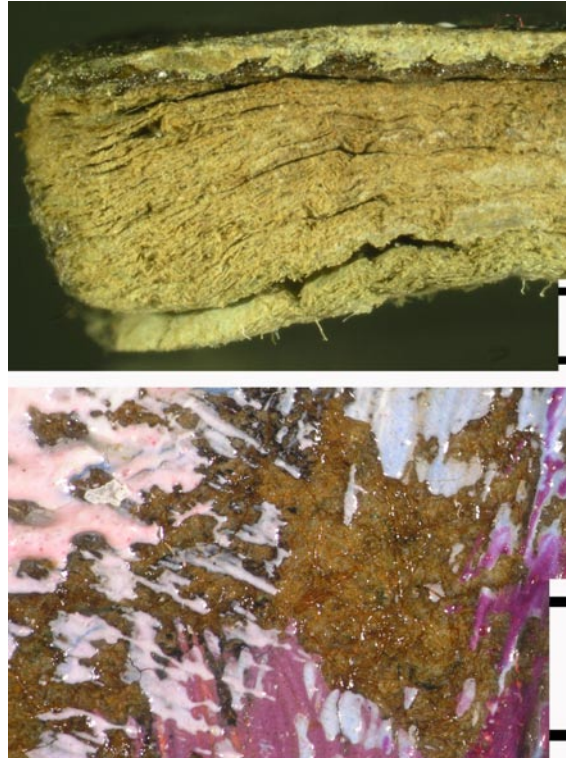


Fig. 8

Detail, loose application of paint, its direction often determined by the motif, with numerous areas of the very dark, unprimed board left visible

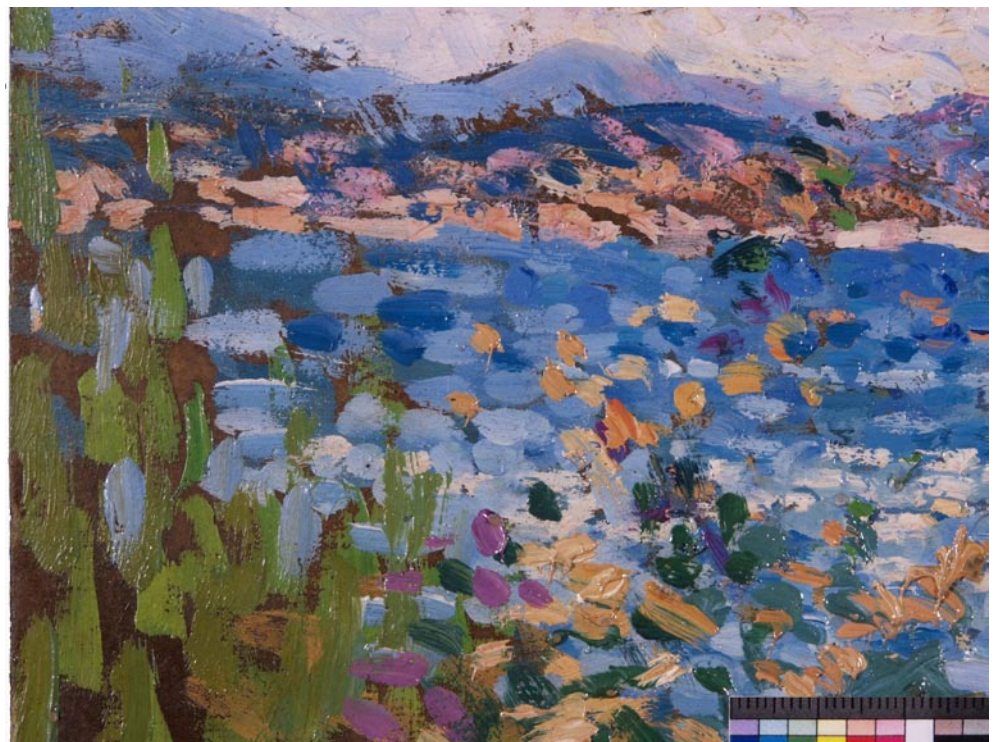




Fig. 9
Details of the paint application in incident light (left) and under UV stimulation (right); the strong fluorescence of the red lake can be easily seen

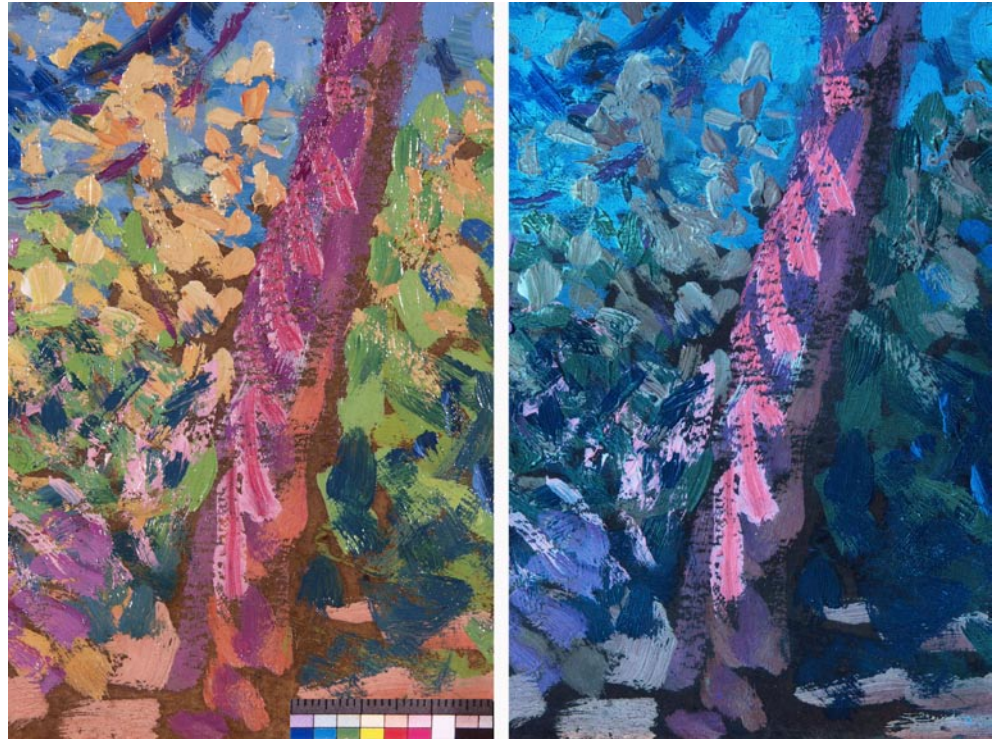


Fig. 10
Detail in raking light, brushwork in the region of the sky and dry brushstrokes in the tree on the right-hand edge of the picture

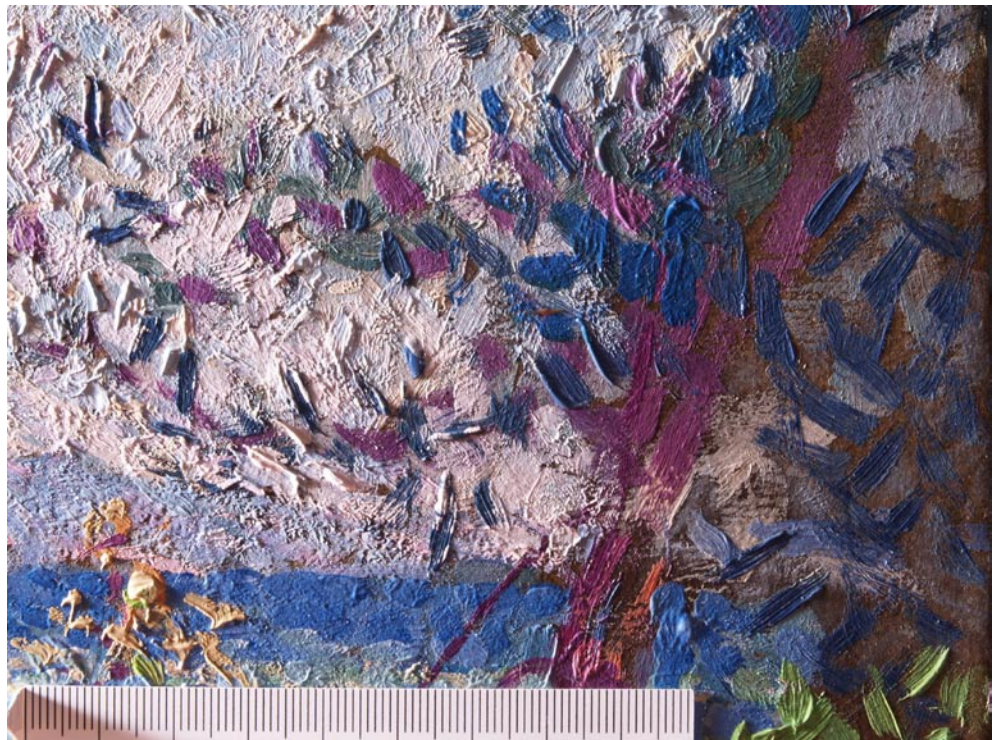




Fig. 11
Use of cobalt violet,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12
Detail, photograph
under UV stimulation,
remains of varnish
in the crevices of the
surface structure point
to the removal of a
previous coating