



Hippolyte Petitjean

(1854-1929)

Rural Scene

(Scène champêtre)

c. 1898

signed bottom right:
„Atelier Hipp. Petitjean“

no date

*oil on tropical wood,
mounted firmly on plywood*

h 18.7 cm x b 25.4 cm

WRM Dep. FC 675





Brief Report

This small study in all probability served as the basis for a more finished composition. The panel on which the picture is painted has been primed with a pale beige ground, which is clearly visible where the panel has been left unpainted and integrated into the colour composition (fig. 5). The sketching of the planned areas of colour and the figures and landscape elements was done in two stages: first the position of the figures was established with a lead or graphite pencil, and then the contours were added in black India ink in almost painterly fashion (figs. 3, 7, 8). The paint was applied in up to three layers, using quite viscous material, so that a lively surface structure results. This is however quietened by evenly applied horizontal or diagonal brush-strokes (fig. 10). Whether the study was executed *en plein air* cannot be determined. It is true that there are two nail-holes next to each other in the bottom left-hand corner, which could be the result of the canvas-pins commonly employed at the time for handling paintings while still wet (fig. 6).

The right-hand nail-hole, at least, was not painted over. The fact that there are no such holes in the other corners could be the result of a later cropping of the panel. In addition, some impasto areas were pressed and soiled while they were still damp. Whether this could have been caused by the painting's having been kept in a paint box, or happened while it was being carried from outdoors to indoors, must likewise remain an open question. These traces could also have arisen while the painting was in storage in a studio. The studio stamp in the bottom right-hand corner of the picture was added at a later date (fig. 4).



Picture support panel

Standard format	originally presumably the standard P3 size (19.0 x 27.0 cm), horizontal
Thickness	2 mm (reduced), 1 mm (the marouflage occurred no later than 1955)
Type of wood	tropical hardwood (no further specification possible)
Panel structure	consists of one board
Grain direction	vertical
Cut of panel	presumably radial
Traces left by production/treatment	none present, the verso having been thinned and irreversibly concealed
Producer's/dealer's marks	none

Ground

Sizing	uncertain
Colour	pale beige
Application	single layer, very thin, presumably applied horizontally
Binding medium	presumably semi-oil
Character and appearance	opaque homogeneous layer, weakly pigmented (isolated red, brown and black pigment particles can be discerned); the wood structure of the panel remains visible, the even thickness of the layer could point to industrial production (fig. 5)



Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	graphite or lead pencil, in addition black Indian ink(?)
Extent/character	roughly sketched in pencil, then in painterly fashion with a brush or quill (figs. 7, 8); the latter contours deviate very slightly (c. 1 mm) from the pencil lines; already containing a great deal of compositional detail, the underdrawing structures the picture into individual colour fields and representational areas such as figures and trees; the position of bushes is indicated by short shading lines; in the bottom right quadrant, the underdrawing is much reduced, the contour of the woman being only partially laid-in in pencil (fig. 3)
Pentimenti	in the underdrawing the tree on the right reaches much further down than in the finished painting; the leg of the figure in the left foreground is not bent at the knee, but stretched (fig. 9)



Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

the paint was applied in layers of varying thickness; the individual colours were, according to the principles of optical colour mixing, either deliberately juxtaposed or superimposed, in some cases in three layers; generally the brush-strokes can be made out as horizontal left to right, or diagonal top left to bottom right; the brush-strokes vary in length from 1.0 cm down to dabs 2 mm in diameter; while the dabs are impasto in character, the quantity of paint at the tail-end of the longer brush-strokes is smaller; in general, the paint has a fair amount of body (fig. 10)

Painting tools

flat brushes(?), breadth of stroke 2-5 mm

Surface structure

the "body" created by the up to three-layer dabs gives rise to a lively surface structure, whose cohesion is maintained however by the constancy (length, direction) with which the brush-strokes were executed within any given colour field

Palette

hues revealed by visual microscopic inspection: white, bright yellow, orange, bright medium red, reddishbrown, pale red lake, violet, greenish-blue, dark blue, medium green, dark green, blends only with white

VIS spectrometry (this method produces here largely uncertain results): chrome cadmium yellow(?), chrome yellow with an orange cast(?), vermilion(?) or rose madder(?), cochineal(?), cobalt violet(?), ultramarine or cobalt blue(?), iron-oxide red/iron-oxide brown, cerulean blue, viridian

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/condition

originally unvarnished; the existing thin, slightly irregular coating is on top of a slightly soiled paint layer and reaches down into the fine craquelure of the paint layer



Signature/Mark

When? at a later date (maybe by executor or on occasion of memorial exhibition in 1955?)

Autograph signature –

Serial stamped

Frame

Authenticity not original

State of preservation

The panel has been thinned, and cropped at the sides (by a total of 1.5 cm from the standard size) and at some time before 1955 mounted firmly on a 6-layer plywood panel; the top right and bottom left corners of the panel are damaged and were restored; the adhesion of the Indian ink(?) (which has a high proportion of binding material) in the underdrawing is not intact, there is conspicuous craquelure and occasional losses (fig. 8); paint layer largely intact.

Additional remarks

Verso (on the plywood board) is a stamp, similar in pigmentation, form and script to the studio stamp, which reads “Centenaire Hipp[olyte] Petitjean” (measuring 6.0 x 1.4 cm, height of lettering 2.5 mm), which in all probability was applied in the context of the centennial memorial exhibition held in Paris (fig. 12); a connexion between the two stamps may be presumed; however in the catalogue of the memorial exhibition the painting is not listed [Catalogue de l'exposition du Centenaire d'Hippolyte Petitjean 1854-1954. Suivi d'un Sommaire de Technologie Divisionniste. Sous le Patronage du Syndicat de la Presse Artistique Française Dans Les Salles, par la Galerie de l'institut, Paris. 15 Avr. 1955].



Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhib. cat. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud Cologne, 8. September - 9. Dezember 2001), Cologne 2001, cat. no. 129, p. 292, with ill.

Source of illustrations

All 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 | – Cross-section |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| – X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

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Hippolyte Petitjean – Rural Scene

Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso





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Fig. 3
Infra-red reflectogram

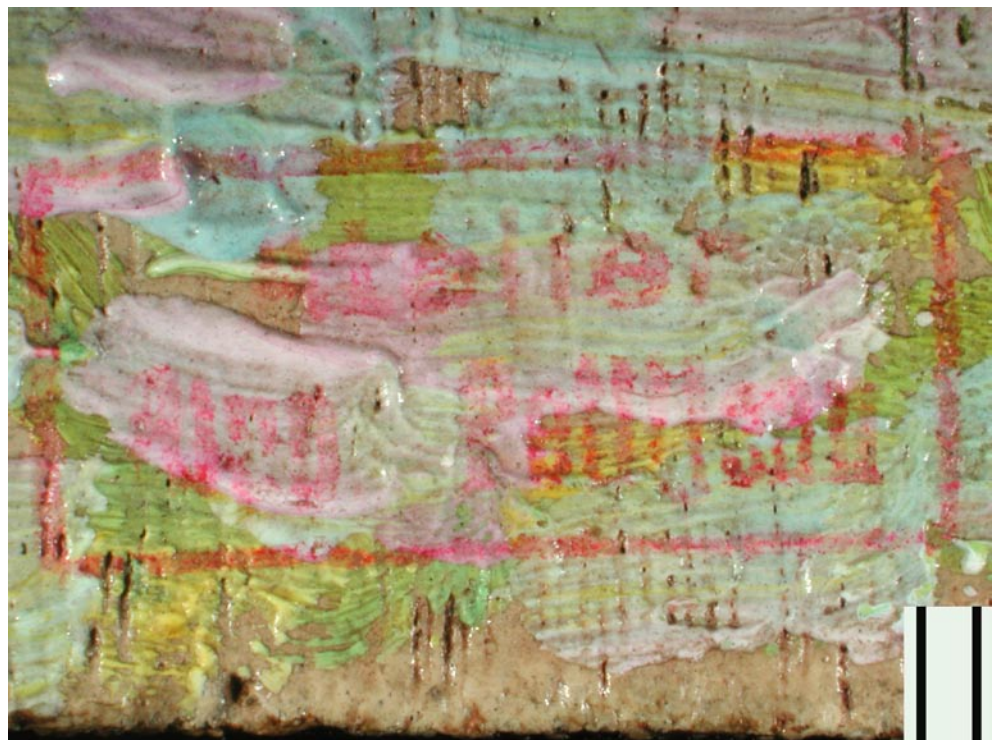


Fig. 4
Studio stamp recto,
"Atelier Hipp Petitjean",
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



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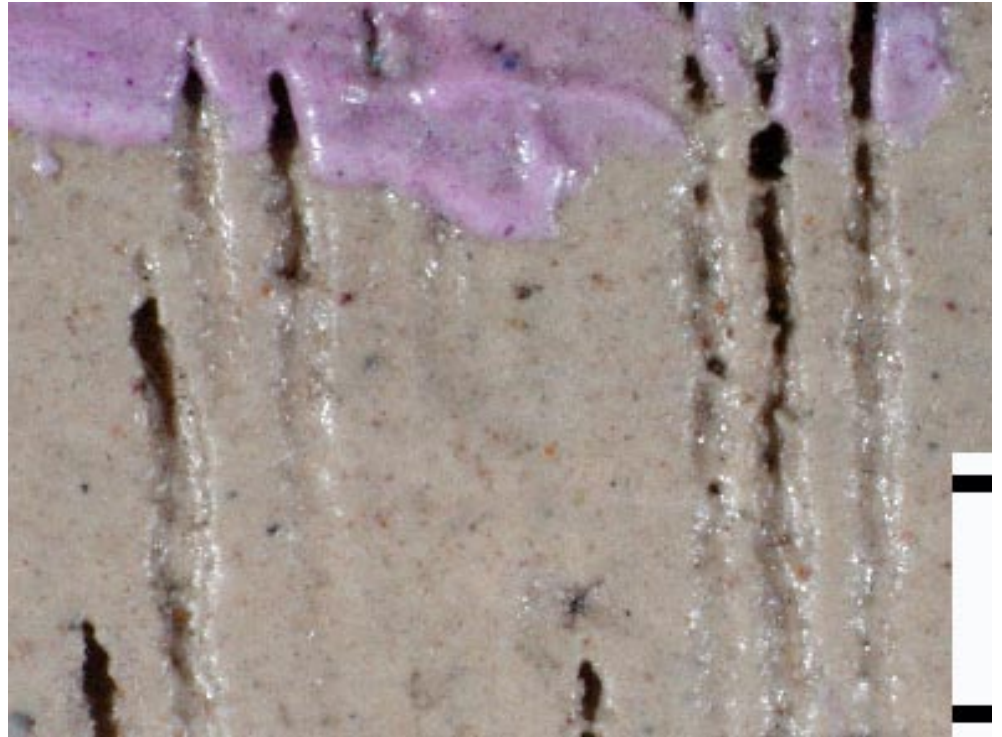


Fig. 5
Beige ground,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)

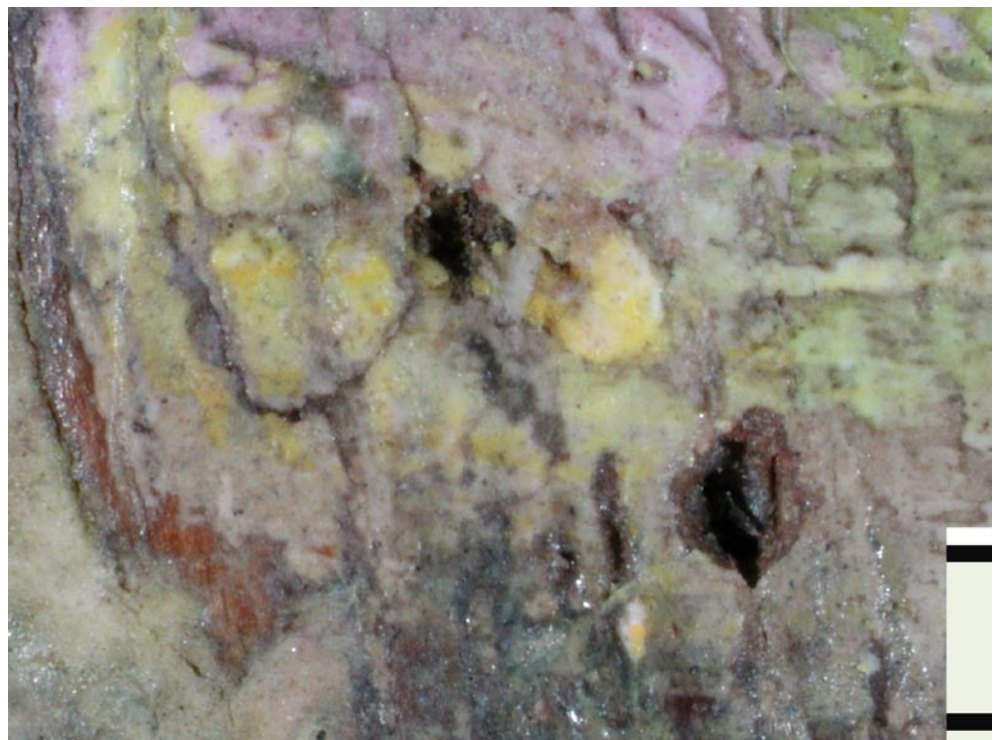


Fig. 6
Adjacent holes in the
panel,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)

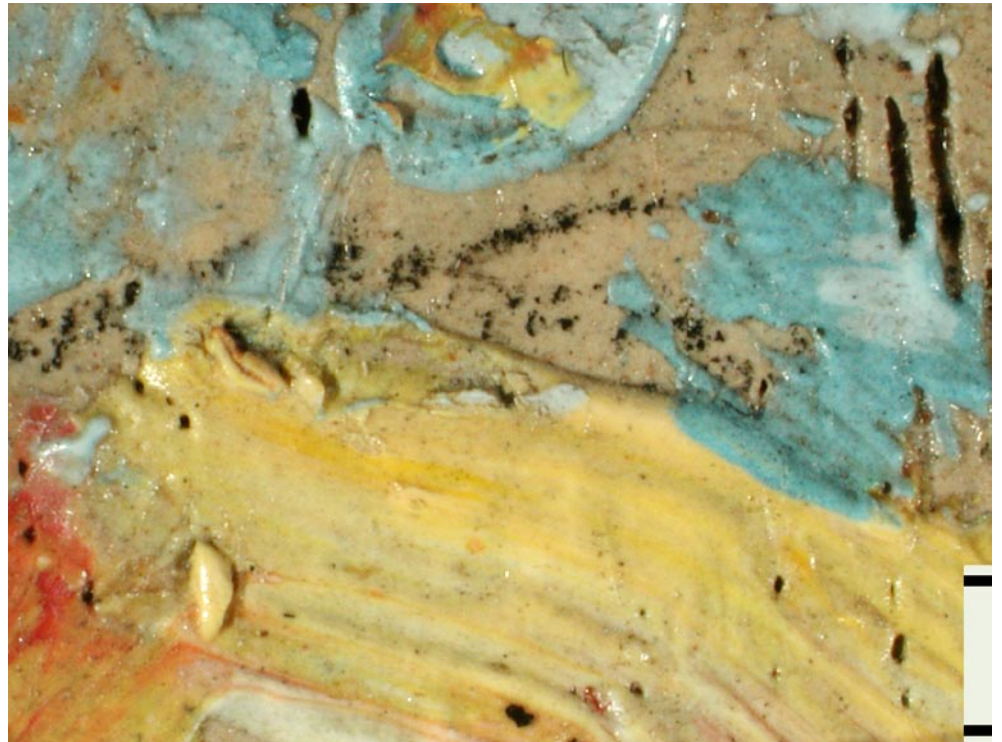


Fig. 7
Underdrawing in lead
or graphite pencil,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)

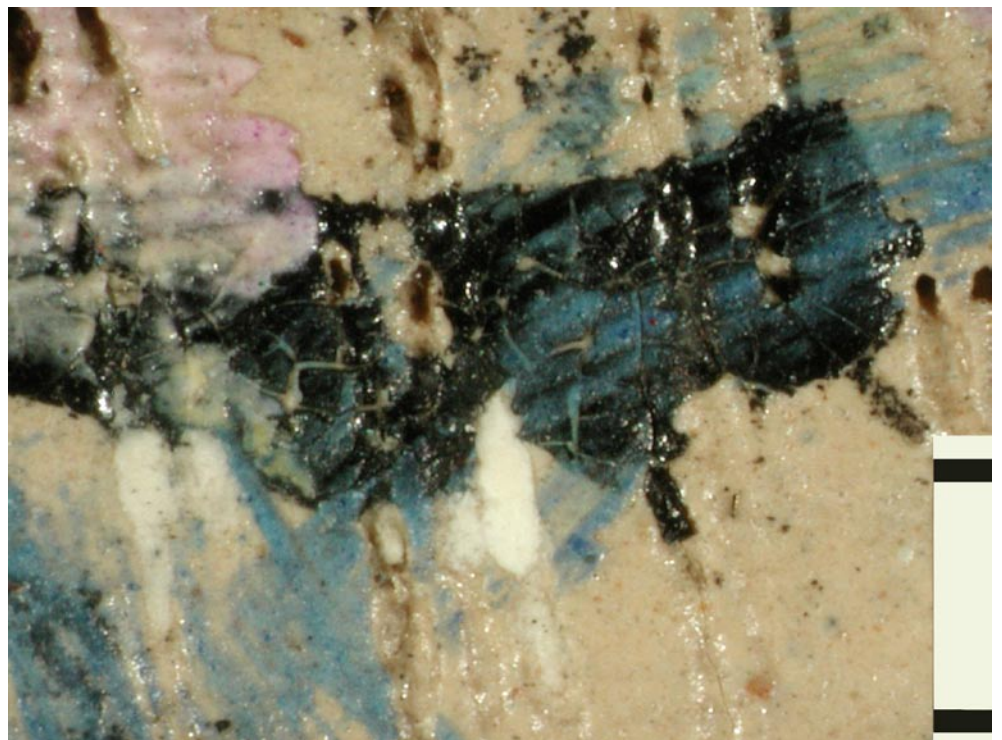


Fig. 8
Underdrawing in black
Indian ink,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 9
Detail in raking light,
painterly pentimento of
the left-hand figure in
the foreground

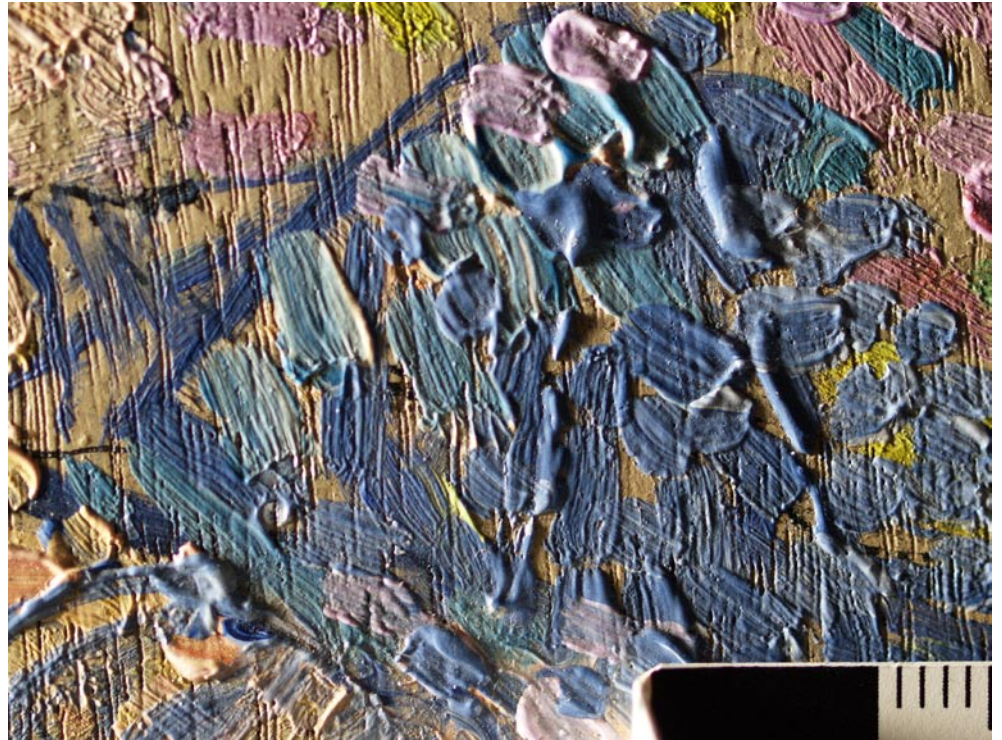


Fig. 10
Detail in raking light,
directional brush-strokes

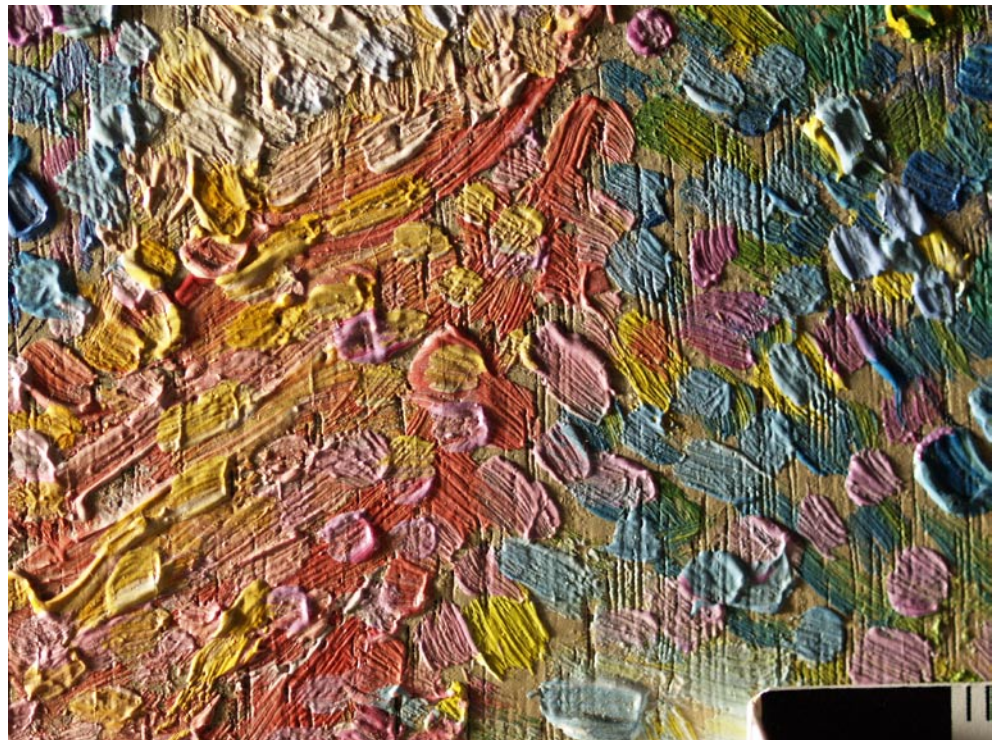




Fig. 11
Detail under UV
fluorescence stimulation,
conspicuously pink
fluorescence of the red
lake



Fig. 12
Verso, detail of the stamp
with the inscription
“Centenaire Hipp[olyte]
Petitjean”; easily
legible only under UV
fluorescence stimulation
as it is written in pale red
on a dark brown board

