



Hippolyte Petitjean

(1854-1929)

The Bridge

(Le Pont)

c. 1890

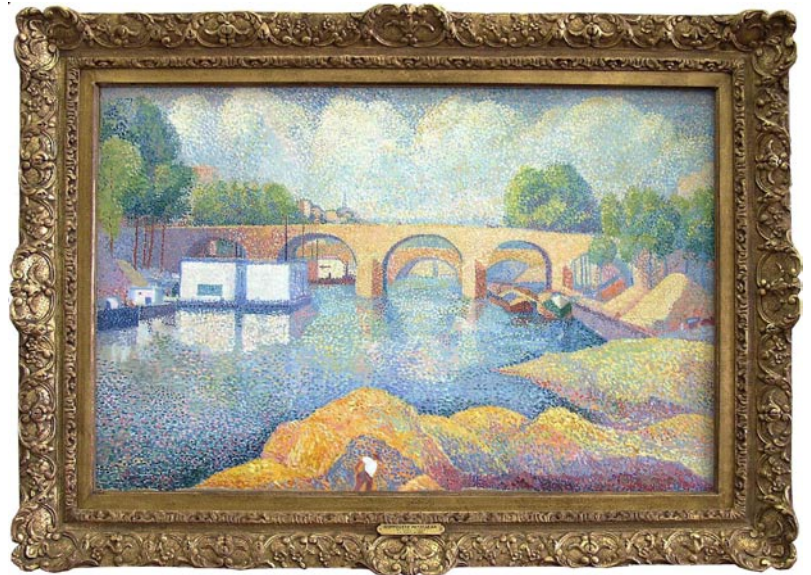
signed bottom right: "hipp. Petitjean"

undated

oil on canvas

h 67.2 cm x b 56.2 cm

WRM Dep. 816





Brief Report

The canvas, at first fastened only provisionally, and presumably to some rigid base, was probably primed very thinly in white by the artist himself without any sizing. The area to be primed and subsequently painted was previously marked out by Petitjean with a dark border (fig. 8). On the ground, he then drew a relatively wide-meshed and not altogether regular grid in the bottom half of the picture, before transferring the simple outlines of the motif in deep-black pencil (fig. 9). The use of a grid suggests an independent pattern in the form of a preliminary drawing or photograph. Remarkably, Petitjean began the colour execution of this Pointillist depiction with the application of partial underpainting of whole areas in the respective local colour (fig. 11). As the process continued he tended to move from paler to darker, and from cooler to warmer shades. The different colours were applied generally at different times during the painting process. With a preliminary dabbing application, the painter loosely filled out the areas in a basic colour, placing the dabbed outlines along contours he had already drawn. These were only covered over with paint in a subsequent phase.

The dominant grid-lines in the area of the water he covered over, after the first dark blue applications, with pale blue and in a white which is now off-white, as the stimulation with UV-radiation stimulation also shows (fig. 5). In this case he waited till it had dried, but otherwise he applied successive colours wet-in-wet. The colours were as a rule used unmixed; mixtures can only be found with white and black. Areas where the dabs of paint are clearly demarcated on or next to each other alternate with others where they were applied wet-in-wet. In the foreground area, and in the reflections of the houseboats to the left and the boat on the right, a number of corrections or uncertainties in the course of the painting process can be discerned (fig. 12). Here the paint applications are in a number of layers, in some cases not dabbed on, but applied with strokes of the brush, often wet-in-wet. In the reflections of the houseboats the painter removed already dabbed-on applications over sizable areas in order to re-compose this section of the picture.



Picture support canvas

Standard format	stretcher (not original): Marine 40 (100 x 65 cm), horizontal; stamp “40 M” on the right-hand bar of the stretcher (fig. 2)
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical 17-18, horizontal 14 threads per cm
Stretching	the present stretching is not original, but the third stretching of the painting; however it is closely based on the second stretching, which may have been carried out by the artist himself; after being temporarily fastened to a rigid underlay, the finished painting was stretched over a stretcher in the somewhat larger standard M40 format, whereby the top edge of the picture was pulled over the edge of the stretcher (fig. 1); the current stretching adopted this positioning of the canvas vis-à-vis the stretcher and dates back to a restoration measure
Stretcher/strainer	stretcher with cross, not original
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.0 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	at the sides there are traces of toolmarks on the foldover edge indicating that when the picture was stretched, the use of tensioning forceps was needed; on the top and bottom edges, however the unpainted margin of the canvas was evidently broad and was only cut to the depth of the stretcher after stretching; the stretcher was tinted with a yellow glaze
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	–



Ground

Sizing	not determined
Colour	white
Application	primed after being cut to size but before stretching; single layer, presumably by artist himself
Binding medium	visual inspection suggests a lean ground
Texture	not sufficient to fill the pores; porous

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	charcoal or lead/graphite pencil (fig. 9)
Extent/character	marking of the boundaries of the picture on the canvas support (fig. 8); recognizable grid with lines at slightly different distances apart (8-9 cm) in the area of the water (fig. 6); contours of the picture elements in simple lines and varying breadths of stroke (fig. 9); neither stereo-microscopy nor IR reflectography can follow the underdrawing beneath the paint applications completely, but the presumption is that the complete composition was underdrawn
Pentimenti	in places contours were shifted during the painting process; changes of mind along the bottom edge of the picture: the blue area in front of the first mound of sand or grain originally stretched further to the left (fig. 12), the dark-red strip to the right of it was originally broader at the top with the application of red dabs; the application of dark-green underpainting in the area of the vegetation on the left-hand edge seems to have been reduced while the paint was still wet



Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

partial underpainting over sizable areas in thin paint in a layer varying in thickness in the region of the water and the mound of sand or grain in white to light-grey, in the landscape orange-pink, in the sky light-blue, and in the vegetation in various basic colours (fig. 11); binding media, presumably from subsequent paint applications, have penetrated through to the verso of the canvas in those places where there was no such underpainting (fig. 2); subsequent dabbing applications of paint, in places the dabs are also directional, either horizontal or diagonal from top left to bottom right; rarely, there are longer brush-strokes, either vertical or covering a larger area; wet-in-wet only in places; while the first paint was being applied in the area of the water, the black grid lines were dabbed over, as is particularly striking under UV fluorescence (fig. 5); as the individual colour tones were only partially applied wet-in-wet, and there is no clear sequence either for the individual colours or for whole areas, Petitjean evidently worked on the whole area of the canvas, letting paint applications in one part dry while he worked on another

Painting tools

fine flat-ferrule bristle brushes of various widths

Surface structure

the Pointillist technique, with in some cases particulate paint, generates a lively surface relief on the millimetre scale (fig. 3)

Palette

hues revealed by microscopic inspection: white, yellow, pale yellowish-green, medium green, dark green, medium red, dark red, medium reddish-brown, violet, dark blue, medium blue, colours unmixed or mixed with white, paints overwhelmingly with very fine particles and homogeneous

VIS spectrometry: chrome or cadmium yellow(?), Rinmann's green(?), viridian, iron-oxide red(?), vermilion(?), cobalt violet(?), ultramarine, Prussian blue(?)

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition

not original



Signature/Mark

When?	on the dry paint layer (fig. 7)
Autograph signature	presumably: signature show the same distortions and signs of aging as the paint layer (fig. 7)
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

Re-stretching of the canvas on a standard-size stretcher with subsequent tensioning has resulted in serious distortions of the edges of the picture that extend into the paint-layer and the motif (figs. 1, 7); damaged foldover edge on the left-hand side has been underlaid with paper, and damage to the canvas recto has been repaired with canvas plaster; network of cracks in the paint-layer; in places pale powdery deposits on the surface of the paint.

Additional remarks

The Indianapolis Museum of Art has a painting attributed to Petitjean titled Three Figures in a Landscape, undated, 45.7 cm x 38.0 cm, The Holliday Collection 79.239, in which an IR reflectogram also reveals a grid (information from Ellen Lee, Wood-Pulliam Senior Curator, Indianapolis Museum of Art).

Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (Ausst.kat. Köln Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, 8. September - 9. Dezember 2001), Köln 2001, without cat. no., p. 432, with figs.



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 | |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| – X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

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Author of brief report:	Katja Lewerentz, Katja von Baum	Date: 04/2008



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Fig. 1
Recto

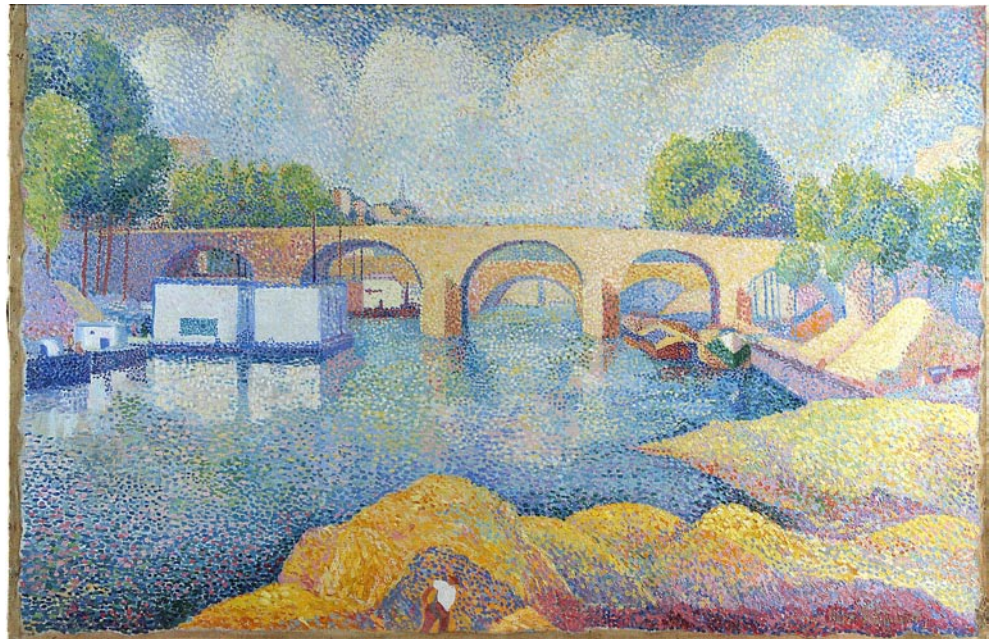


Fig. 2
Verso





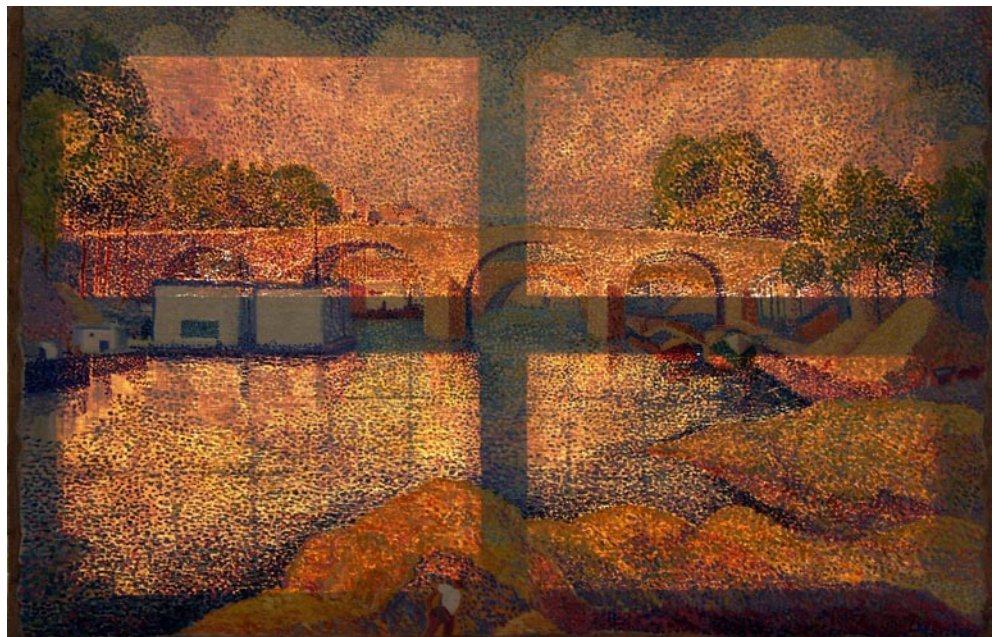
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Fig. 3
Raking light



Fig. 4
Transmitted light





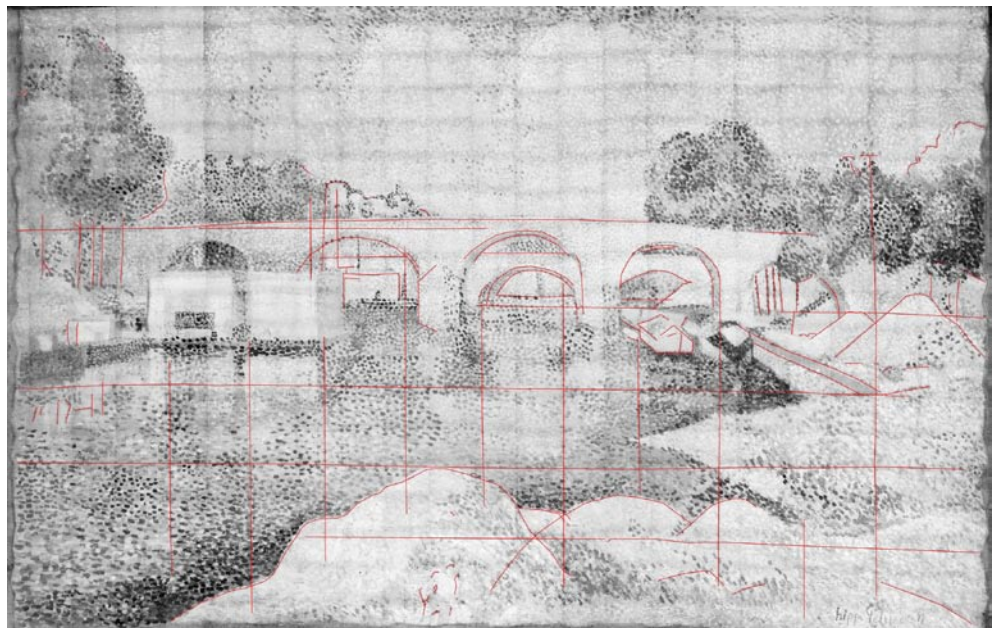
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Fig. 5
UV fluorescence



Fig. 6
IR reflectogram with
mapping of the visible
grid and underdrawing
lines





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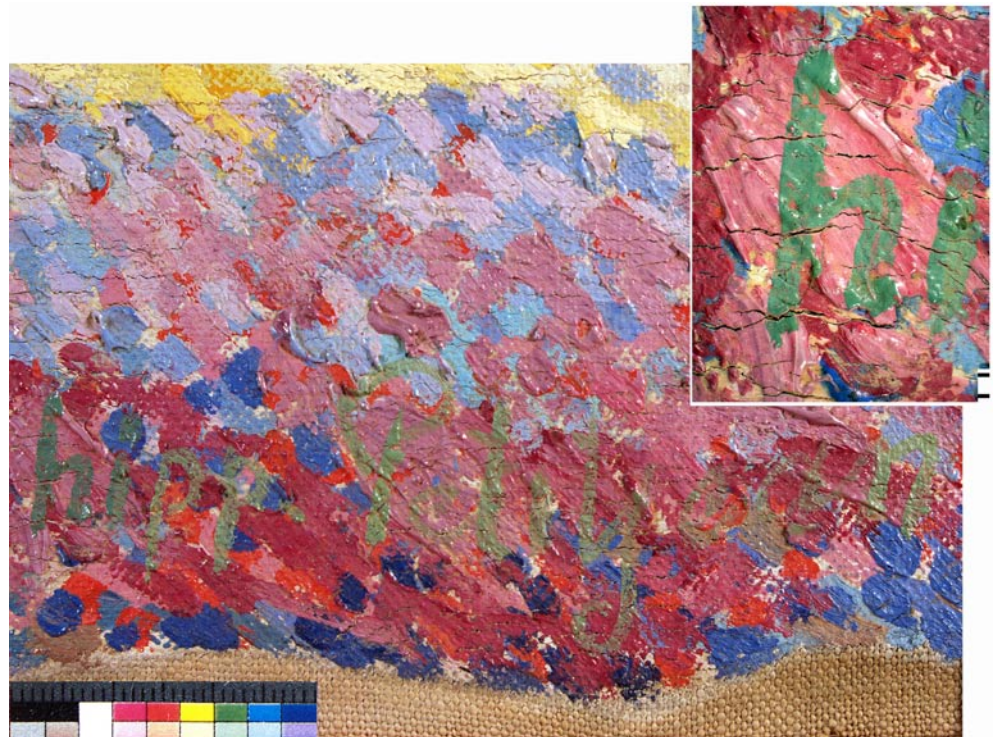


Fig. 7
Detail, signature

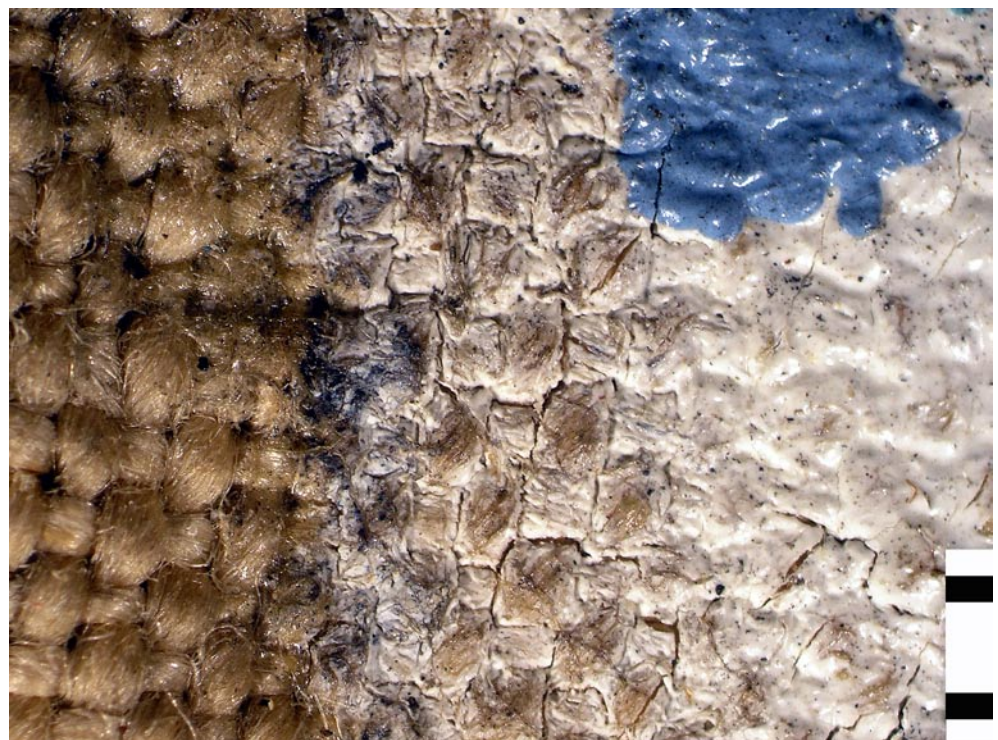


Fig. 8
Edge of picture, dark
border, microscopic
photograph (M = 1 mm)

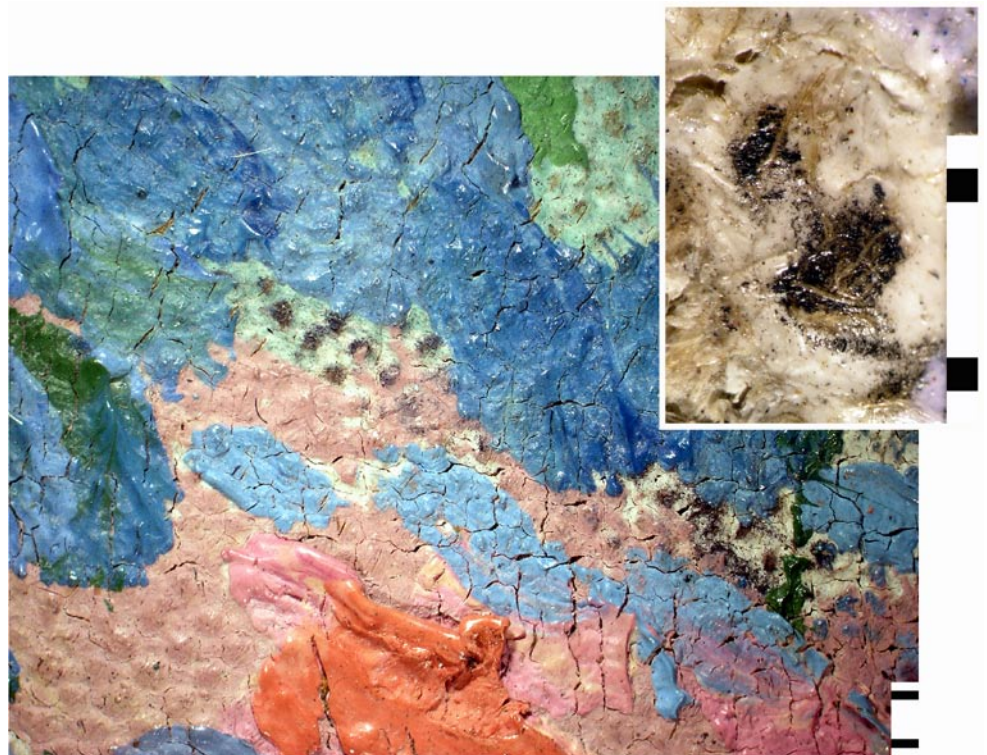


Fig. 9
Underdrawing lines
in charcoal or pencil,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10
Detail, grid lines covered
by artist himself with
applications of light-blue
paint (arrows)



Fig. 11
Pink partial
underpainting layer,
followed by applications
of white and yellow
paint,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12
Detail, pentimento,
medium-blue paint was
covered (arrows)