



Christian Rohlfs
(1846-1890)

Landscape
(Landschaft)

1903

*signed and dated bottom right:
"C Rohlfs 02"*

Oil on canvas

h 62.0 cm x b 77.0 cm

WRM Dep. FC 792





Brief Report

This painting, dated by Vogt to 1903, but dated by the artist himself “02” (fig. 7), shows a landscape with a view of a town which has not to date been identified, but may be in the vicinity of Weimar [Vogt 1978, cat. no. 293]. The picture was painted at a time when Rohlfs was appointed a professor at the Academy in Weimar and was confronting the works of the French Pointillistes for the first time. He chose a canvas in which the warp and weft yarns alternate in pairs (fig. 11). Known as Panama weave, this is a derivation of the traditional tabby weave, and is comparatively rare in artists’ canvases. In all probability Rohlfs stretched and primed this canvas himself. The pale blue colour of the ground seems to have been chosen deliberately with the intended landscape in view. As a result, in the region of the sky Rohlfs was able to place the dots and short strokes fairly loosely on the canvas and thus incorporate the basic hue of the ground economically into the painting (fig. 11).

As for the rest of the landscape, the pale blue of the ground comes across variously in simultaneous contrast with the predominantly pure colours, which likewise may have been intentional on the artist’s part (figs 9, 10). In the landscape, the arrangement, concentration and pastosity of the dots and strokes increase towards the foreground. Interestingly, the paint application in some of the forms depicted, which were previously coarsely underdrawn with a pencil or crayon, comes across as more systematic (figs 9, 10). In paint applications which overlap or even cover each other, mixing, or at least deformation, can be noted in the surfaces of the dabs and strokes, which would not have been completely dry (figs 8, 12). This points to a generally brisk execution of the painting, even though the painting technique forces us to assume a number of working sessions.



Picture support canvas

Standard format	–
Weave	Panama weave (fig. 11)
Canvas characteristics	vertical 26 individual threads (13 pairs), horizontal 28 individual threads (14 pairs) per cm; yarn thickness app. 0.3 mm (weft) and app. 0.5 mm (warp); slight irregularities in the form of knots and thickening of the yarn especially in the warp yarns; here and there dark lignin fibres are present in the yarn; the close winding of the weft yarns around the thicker warp yarns emphasizes the elevations of the latter recto; the selvage is preserved at the bottom edge of the canvas
Stretching	authentic; cut to size parallel with the yarns, and stretched; highly variable (3-10 cm) intervals between the tacks
Stretcher/strainer	original softwood stretcher, however used for the second time; abutted (not mitred) at the corners, and fastened by mortise-and-tenon joints; the frame can be tightened by wedges in both directions
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.3 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	–
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	–



Ground

Sizing	either none or next to none
Colour	pale blue
Application	after stretching; applied all round parallel to the edges, mostly then smoothed and spread out with the brush, although a dabbing application can also be discerned
Binding medium	probably a semi-oil ground manufactured by the artist himself
Texture	the thickness of the ground varies slightly, in the top half somewhat thicker, in the region of the landscape by contrast the elevations of the canvas threads are only just covered, so that all in all the weave texture is clearly visible; presumably fairly fluid at the time of application, the ground has partially penetrated the close weave of the canvas

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	soft graphite(?) pencil, app. 0.5 mm thick, which mainly covers the elevations of the warp yarns (fig. 8)
Extent/character	except for an almost complete horizontal line to mark the horizon, only very few and very sketchy indications in the regions of the landscape (fields and haystacks) and the architecture
Pentimenti	to the right of the towers are four dashed vertical lines, which possibly indicate the position of the towers as originally planned



Paint layer

Paint application/technique
and artist's own revision

predominantly dashes or dots of paint juxtaposed, or more rarely superimposed (breadth between 0.3 and 0.8 cm, length between 0.2 and 1.0 cm); the individual applications, of varying viscosity, are more impasto the more white they contain; the arrangement and orientation often emphasize the shape in question (e.g. clouds in the sky, haystack on the left); in the sky and in the areas with preliminary sketches, the dots of paint are mostly clearly separate with one dominant colour (figs 9, 11); by contrast the applications of paint on the undulating landscape in the foreground differ in size, orientation and colour, and sometimes overlap (figs 1, 4, 8, 10, 12)

Painting tools

bristle brushes

Surface structure

surface relief more pronounced in some places than others with a basic dotted structure whose dominance depends on the amount and consistency of the paint; the sky is more homogeneous than the landscape (figs 3, 4)

Palette

visual microscopic inspection: not undertaken;
VIS spectrometry: chrome yellow, chrome orange(?), cadmium orange, vermilion, alizarin lake, chrome green, cobalt blue, ultramarine blue

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition

remains of an older yellowed coat of varnish, most of which has been removed, cannot be definitely excluded as authentic or near-contemporary with the completion of the painting (fig. 5)



Signature/Mark

When?	after the underlying paint-layer had dried
Autograph signature	in orange paint, applied with a brush, often merely raking the elevations of the relief of the underlying paint applications: “C Rohlfs”, and to the right of this, the year of execution “02” (fig. 7)
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	undetermined, in all probability not original
--------------	---

State of preservation

Extreme stretching (in the course of tightening) and/or differential reactions of the warp and weft threads of the canvas to climatic and mechanical influences have led to specific changes: the edges of the ground and paint-layers, which originally extended to the edge of the picture, are now up to 0.8 cm away from each of the short sides, leaving bare canvas visible (fig. 11); torn nail-holes on the left and right turnover edges and vertically oriented craquelure formation, in some places substantial, underscore the sensitivity of the fabric in the weft (i.e. horizontal) direction (fig. 11); deformations (stretchmarks?) at the right-hand edge of the picture, a fine netlike craquelure within the ground, in places continuing into the paint-layer, are taken up by the structure of the weave (figs 8, 12); individual losses in the paint-layer in the impasto areas and on the left-hand edge; remains of a yellowed coat of varnish testify to removal of varnish in the past; the ground seems in places to have come apart from the canvas; all in all, the condition can be described as very fragile.

Additional remarks

Vogt’s dating of the painting to 1903 should be seen in connexion with his observation “bez. u. r.: C Rohlfs 03” (“signed bottom right: C Rohlfs 03”) and seems thus to be based on a misreading of the date next to the signature [Vogt 1978, cat. no. 293].



Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur*, exhib. cat. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne, 8 September - 9 December 2001, Cologne 2001, no cat. no., p. 322., with ill.
- Vogt 1978: Paul Vogt (ed.): Christian Rohlfs. *Œuvrekatalog der Gemälde*, Recklinghausen 1978, cat. no. 293, 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 (canvas fibres, however it was not possible to distinguish between flax and hemp fibres) |
| ✓ Infrared reflectography | |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| ✓ X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

Author of examination:	Katja de Grussa-Bernard
Author of brief report:	Iris Schaefer

Date: 07/2003
Date: 11/2008



Christian Rohlfs – Landscape
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 1
Recto

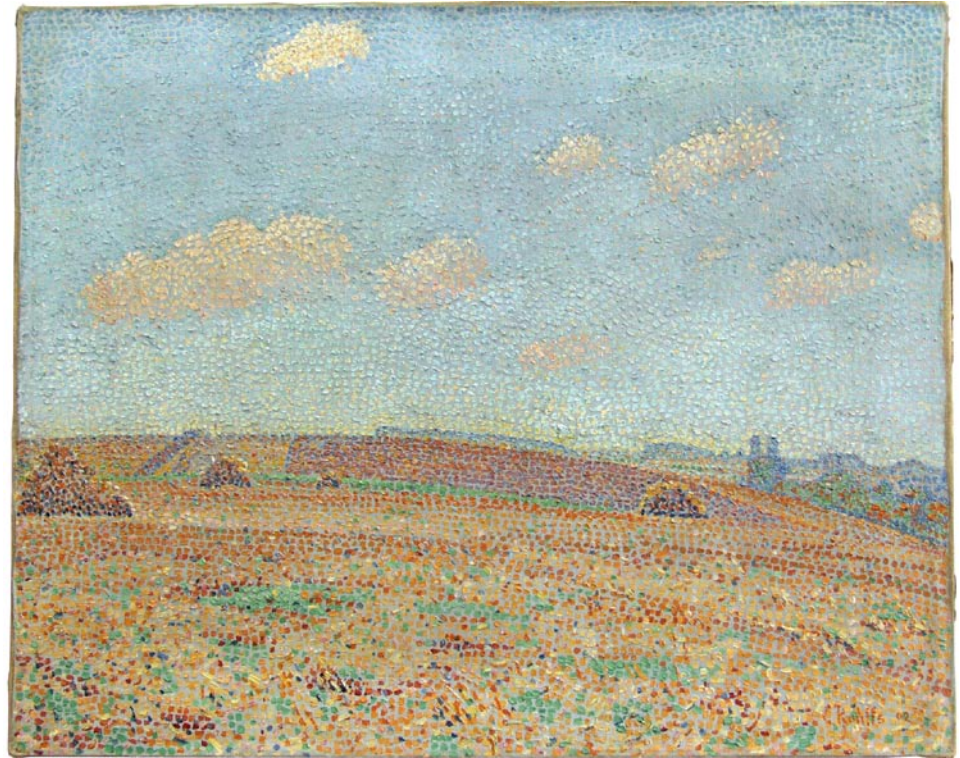


Fig. 2
Verso





Christian Rohlfs – Landscape
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 3
Raking light



Fig. 4
Transmitted light



Christian Rohlfs – Landscape
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 5
UV fluorescence

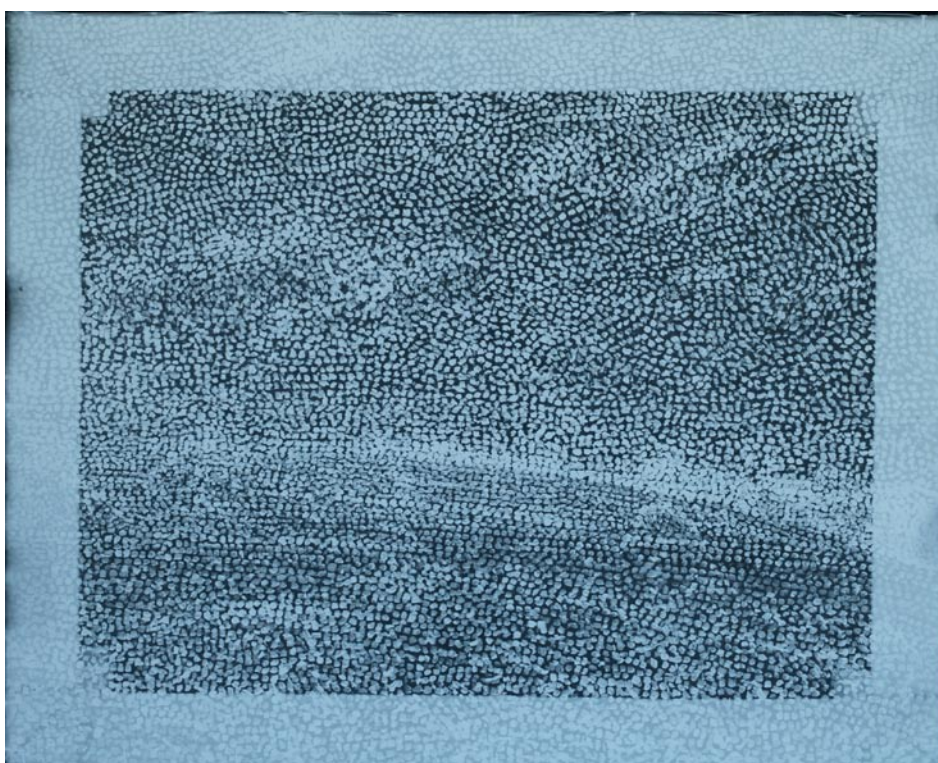


Fig. 6
X-ray



Fig. 7
Detail, signature and
date



Fig. 8
Black underdrawing lines
made with a graphite(?)
pencil in the spaces
between the paint
applications, microscopic
photograph





Fig. 9
Evenly structured paint applications in the region of the undulating landscape (slightly raking light), microscopic photograph



Fig. 10
Paint applications varying in size and arrangement, multiply overlapping for the depiction of the haystack in the middle, microscopic photograph





Fig. 11
Detail, right-hand edge
of picture, where the
original bare turnover
edge of the Panama-
weave fabric has been
pulled into the visible
surface



Fig. 12
Wet-in-wet paint ap-
plications, juxtaposed
and superimposed dots
of paint and conspicuous
craquelure, starting in
the ground but in some
places continuing into
the paint-layer,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)

