



**Théo van Rysselberghe**  
(1862-1926)

**Pines, Monaco**  
(Pins, à Monaco)

1917

*Monogram bottom right "TVR"*

*oil on canvasboard*

*h 32.7 cm x b 40.6 cm*

*WRM Dep. FC 703*





## Brief Report

This landscape-format painting on a canvasboard, an artists' board pasted with cloth (Fr. *carton toile*), in the standard F 6 size shows a cliff on which bushes and pines are growing. To the left, the view opens out to the sea and a pale sky. An arc in the right foreground, cropped by the right-hand and bottom edges, could be the balustrade of an exposed viewpoint. The picture was painted over a rejected composition which was reduced by chemical and mechanical means; this first picture was painted in portrait format and depicted a different motif (figs 5, 6, 10, 11). Van Rysselberghe integrated the colour fields of the rejected composition into the present loosely

painted work, in which, depending on the motif, he varied the brushwork and density of the paint application from fairly thin and semi-transparent in the rocky foreground to strikingly impasto in the clouds. The sequence of paint applications can be read off easily in the stratigraphy of the colour fields. Thus the sea had already been executed and the sky at least laid-in when the cliff and the trees were added; the outlines of the cliffs were clearly embedded in the wet paint of the sea. The painting has been preserved in its unvarnished state and evinces a predominantly very matt surface.



### Picture support board

Standard format	F6 (41,0 x 33,0 cm), horizontal
Thickness	app. 3 mm
Characteristics	microscopic inspection reveals a mixture of rags(?), straw fibres as well as blue and black fibres
Color	beige-brown with a pink tinge
Manufacture/modification	covered recto with pre-primed cloth in tabby weave, the edges of which are turned over verso with turnover edges measuring 15-20 mm; board verso is covered with beige-brown paper with a wood content, so that the turnover edges of the cloth are neatly covered; the cloth has 18–19 threads per cm in each direction, and is stuck to the board with a yellowish transparent adhesive (fig. 2)
Producer's/dealer's marks	–

### Ground

Sizing	undetermined
Colour	pale grey-green
Application	the cloth was primed before being stuck to the board; a damaged area on the bottom edge of the paper cover allows the cut edge of the cloth with the edge of the priming to be seen (fig. 10); after the cloth had been (presumably) sized, a thin white layer was applied which barely filled the pores; the subsequent grey ground was then applied in such a way that the fabric structure is well filled, while remaining clearly visible
Binding medium	the somewhat matt surface suggests the use of a semi-oil binding medium
Character and appearance	matt, with grainy surface and crater-like hollows, clearly discernible pigmentation with, in some places, coarse white (lead white?), blue, green, yellow and red pigments



### Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique: none discovered

Extent/character –

Pentimenti –

### Paint layer

Paint application/technique  
and artist's own revision

the very open painting overlies colour fields of an earlier lay-in whose motifs were not those of the present picture (fig. 11); these areas, still discernible in those places not covered by the paint of the present composition and evidently deliberately integrated into it, evince a markedly maltreated surface, suggesting the use of solvents and mechanical implements; the X-ray shows that the first lay-in was in vertical format, and might depict the corner of a house beneath a cloudy sky (figs 5, 6); early shrinkage cracks, along with the fact that puffy substance from the underlying paint-layers has penetrated through the top paint-layer, suggest that the second composition followed quickly on the first; the paint application of the visible picture varies between semi-transparent and impasto, the brushwork, direction of brushstrokes and density being related to the part of the composition in question (fig. 8); often several colours were taken up by the brush at once without being completely mixed

Painting tools brushes of varying breadth

Surface structure different in the different areas, and determined both by the brushwork and by the consistency of the paint; the impasto increases in line with the proportion of white, and where the paint application is thin or only grazes the elevations of the canvas, the texture of the latter is what determines the surface structure (fig. 4)



### Paint layer (Continuation)

Palette	microscopic visual inspection reveals: two yellows, two reds, two blues, green blended in different proportions with white, yellow and blue, violet mixed from red and blue, brown, brownish-orange, white, the paints being used almost always in mixed form VIS spectrometry: cadmium yellow(?), chrome yellow(?), Hansa (arylamide) yellow(?), alizarin(?)(possibly Germania red(?)/Lithol red(?)), iron-oxide red, cobalt blue, ultramarine blue
Binding mediums	presumably oil

### Surface finish

Authenticity/ Condition	preserved in original unvarnished state
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### Signature/Mark

When?	applied after the paint-layer had dried
Autograph signature	monogram TVR in a square frame, below it the year 1917; executed in thin paint with a brush (fig. 7)
Serial	–

### Frame

Authenticity	not original
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### State of preservation

Abrasions and losses along the edges of the pictures; verso there are marks and losses in the paper covering.



### Additional remarks

In the middle of the right and left-hand edges of the picture there are deformations in the paint-layer possibly due to some attachment device used during the painting process (fig. 13); particularly fascinating is the discovery under the microscope of numerous impressions of the proboscis of a house-fly in the fresh paint-layer (fig. 14).

### 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. 149, p. 336 with ill.
- Feltkamp 2003: Ronald Feltkamp, Théo van Rysselberghe 1862-1926, Brussels 2003, no. 1917-021, p. 418, with ill.

### Source of illustrations

Fig. 14 makes use of a scanning electron microscope image taken from <http://nuh.freeseverhost.com/fliege2.html> on 5 July 2006

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

Author of examination: Dorothee Fobes  
Author of brief report: Hans Portsteffen

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Date: 05/2008





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Fig. 1  
Recto

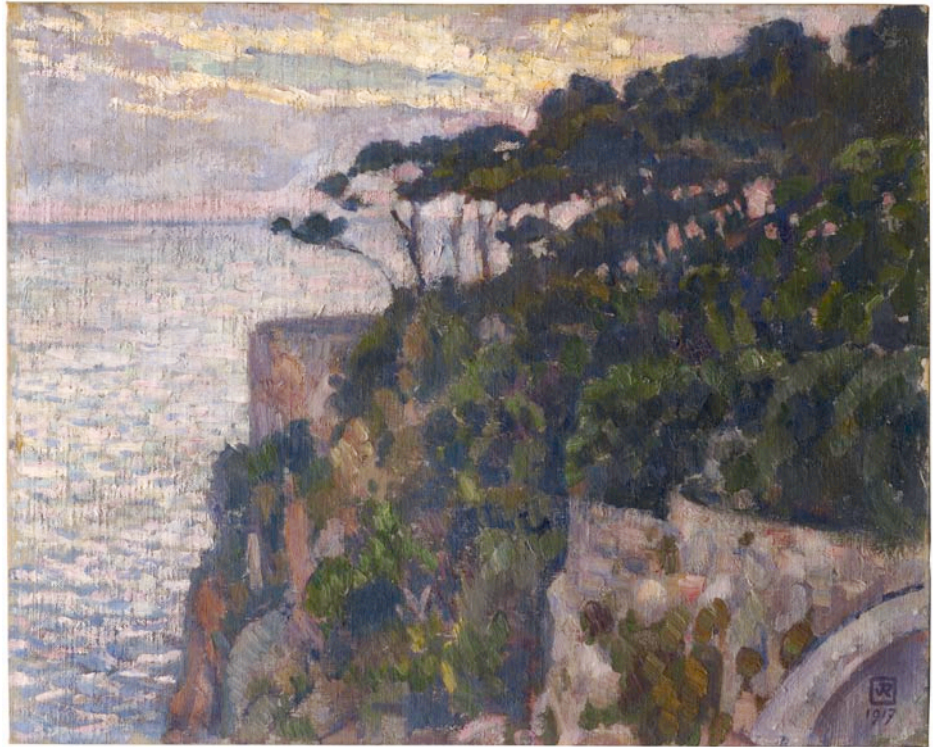


Fig. 2  
Verso

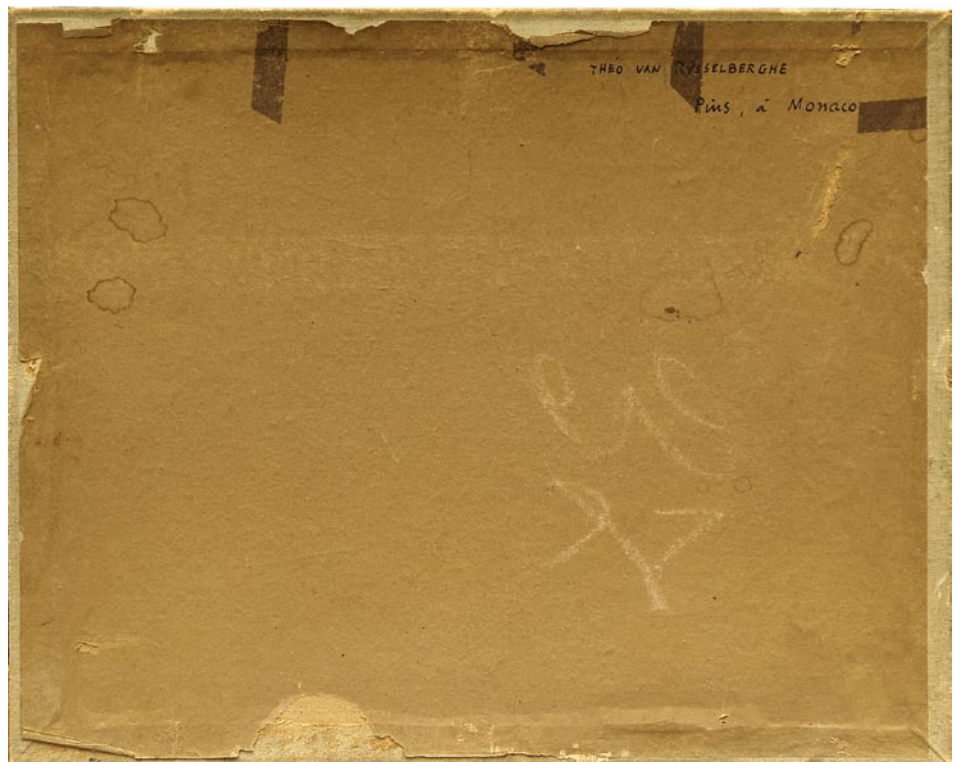






Fig. 3  
UV fluorescence

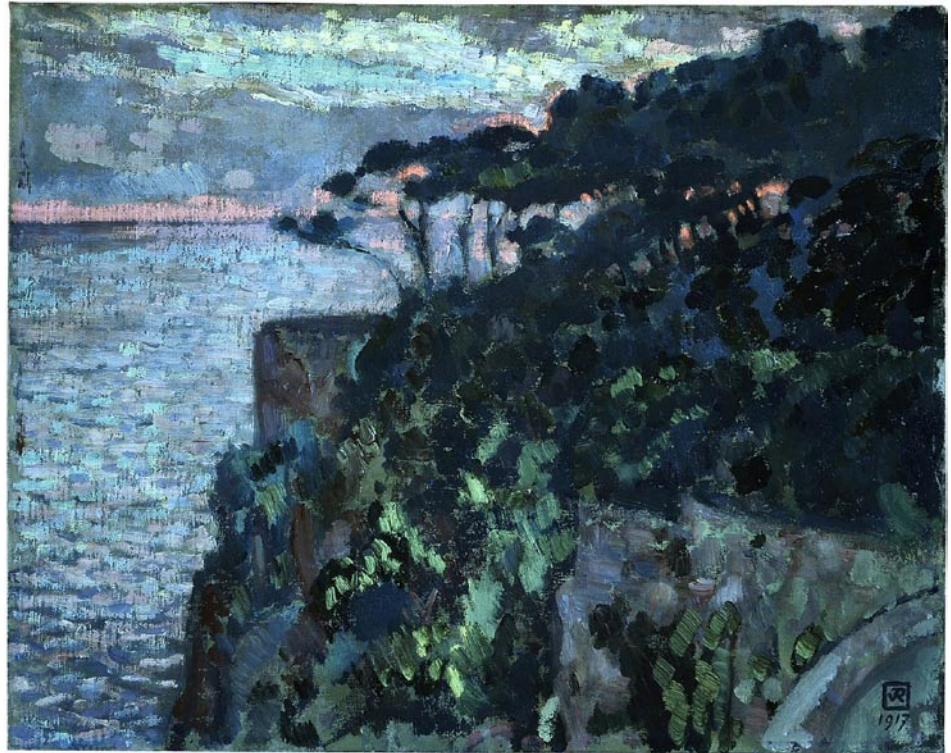
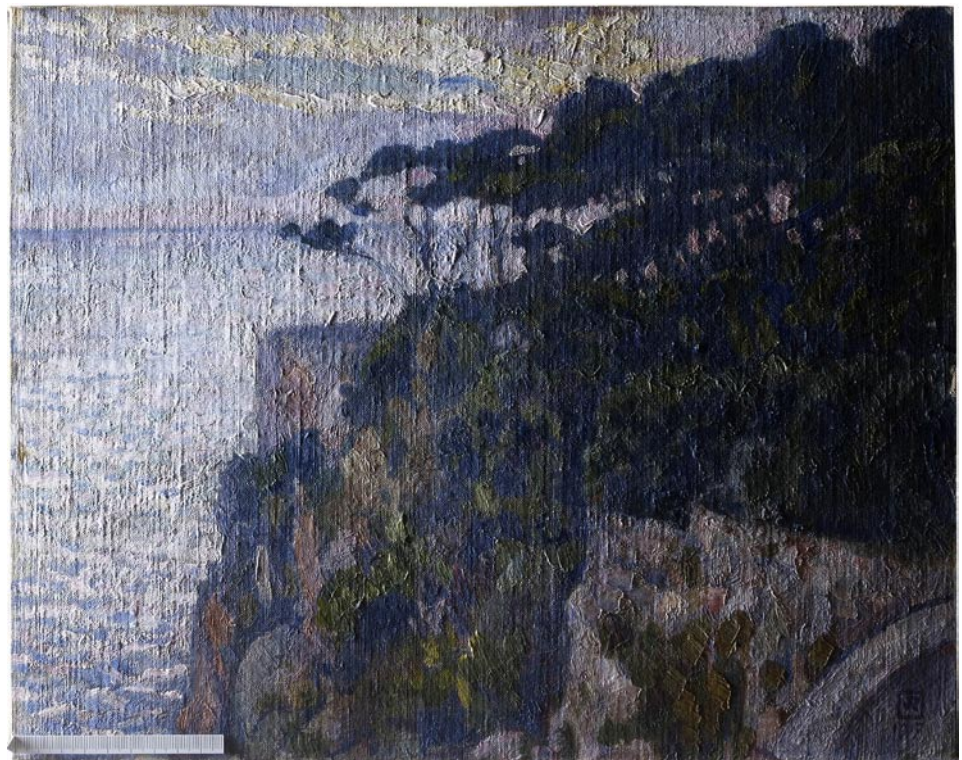


Fig. 4  
Raking light







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Fig. 5  
X-ray



Fig. 6  
X-ray with mapping  
of the colour fields of  
the first composition  
(rotated through 90°  
anti-clockwise)





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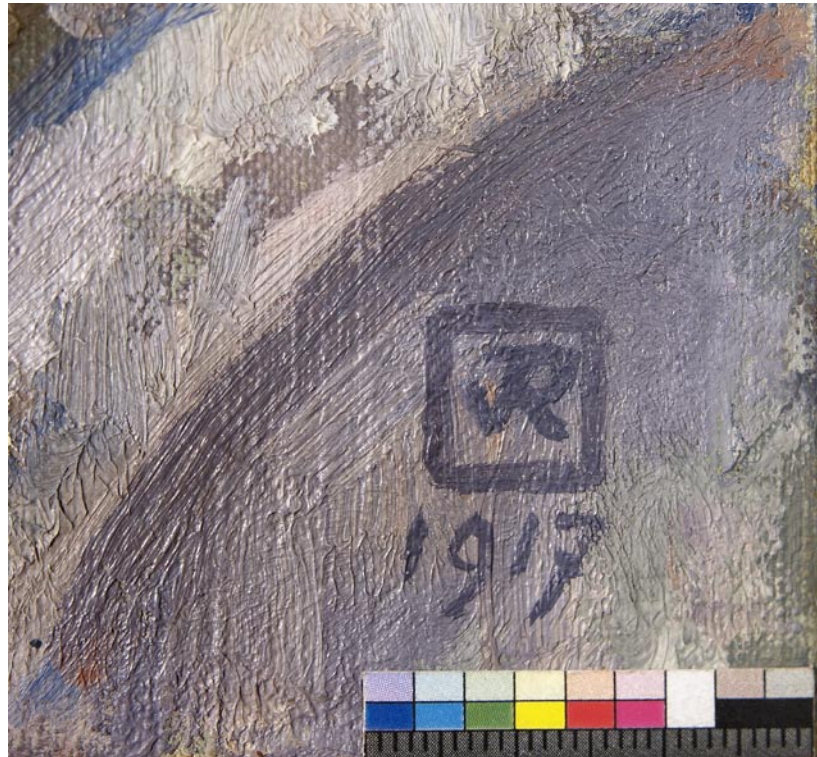


Fig. 7  
Detail, signature



Fig. 8  
Detail under raking light,  
directional brushstrokes





Fig. 9  
Grey-green ground  
with conspicuously  
coarse white pigments,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10  
Edge of the ground on  
the turnover edge; the  
pale, thin layer that  
barely fills the pores is  
followed by the actual  
grey-green ground itself,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)





Fig. 11  
Detail, colour fields of  
the first composition  
integrated into the  
present picture



Fig. 12  
Reduced brown colour  
field from the lay-in  
of the first picture,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)



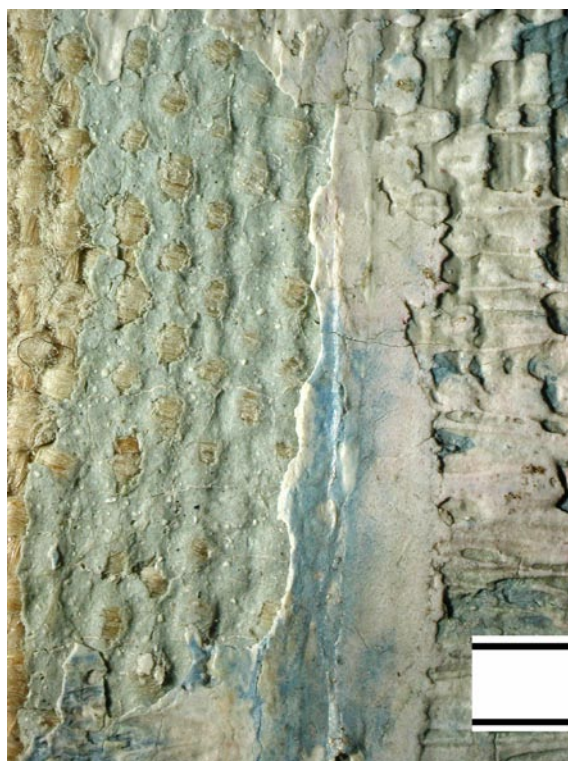


Fig. 13  
Detail, transition from  
grey-green ground to  
painting; impression of  
a fastening device(?) left  
in the wet paint layer,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)

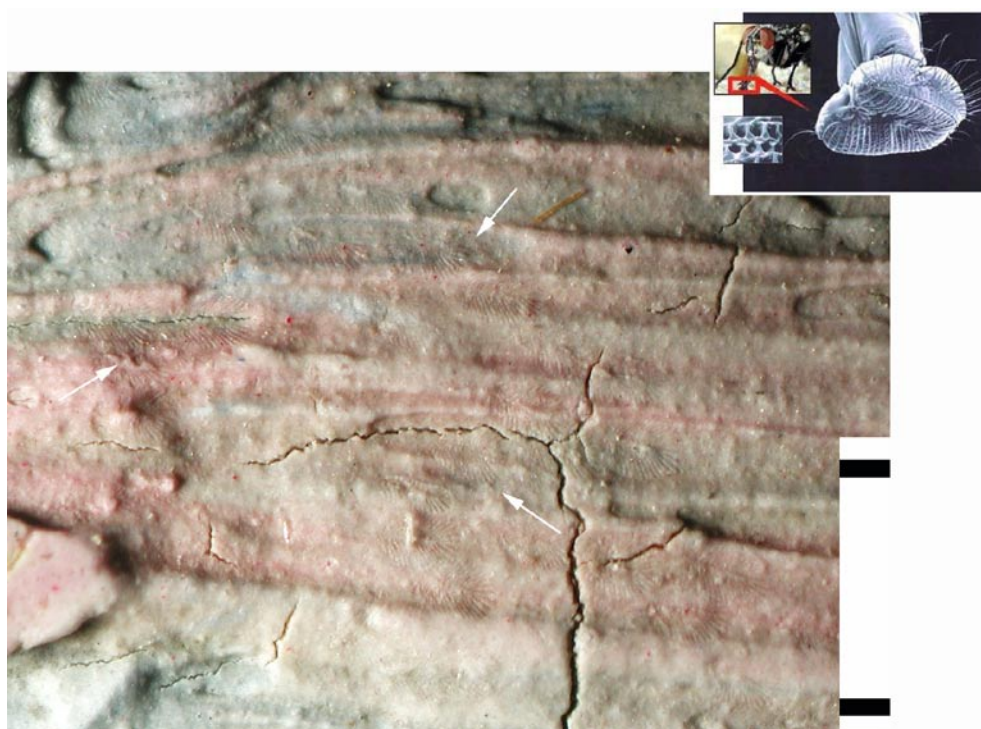


Fig. 14  
Impressions left by a  
house-fly proboscis  
in the paint-layer  
(arrows), microscopic  
photograph (M = 1 mm)  
with scanning electron  
microscope image for  
comparison