



**Paul Signac**

(1863-1935)

**Saint-Tropez, Calm**

(Saint-Tropez, calme)

1895

*signed bottom right: "P. Signac"*

*Oil on poplar panel*

*h 18.5 cm x b 27.2 cm*

*WRM Dep. FC 683*





## Brief Report

The study with the view of the bay of St Tropez was painted by Signac in 1895 during his seven-month sojourn on the Côte d'Azur (fig. 1). As his picture support, he chose an unprimed poplar panel in the standard size P[aysage] 3. A briskly executed drawing of the main forms of the motif was followed by applications of paint in which blue, yellow and orange predominate. The colours, lightened mostly with white, were applied with brushstrokes of varying lengths, some of them exhibiting curves. Some of the applications look rather less than smooth, which may be due either to the use of viscous paint or, and this is more probable, to the absorbency of the wood of the picture support, which may have been only insufficiently prepared, if at all. The surface of the wood was integrated into the largely horizontal brushwork of the colour composition, and the painting was probably completed in one session.

The final pale yellow brushstrokes may have matched the original colour of the wood and thus underscored the open character of this spontaneous plein air study. This cannot however be seen today, as the visible areas of the presumably once very pale surface of the wood are now a deep brown. This change in colour is due not only to natural browning, but also to a later coating with varnish, which made its own contribution to the colour saturation of the already much darkened poplar. The extent to which the colour composition of this study has changed as a result can be seen by looking at a painted reconstruction on a fresh poplar panel (fig. 12). The signature in the bottom right-hand corner extends to the edge of the picture where the wood is visible (fig. 7). Signac is said to have added it only in the early 1920s [Cachin/Ferretti-Bocquillon 2000, p. 219].



### Picture support panel

Standard format	P3 (19.0 x 27.0 cm) horizontal
Thickness	5 mm
Type of wood	poplar ( <i>Populus sp.</i> )
Panel structure	consists of one board, chamfered all round; breadth of chamfer 1.0-1.3 cm
Grain direction:	vertical, parallel to the long sides of the picture support
Cut of panel	tangential
Traces left by production/treatment	very smooth surface, no traces of tooling
Producer's/dealer's marks	Tasset et L'Hote [...] Paris; barely discernible inscription verso in black, probably stamped, perpendicular to the orientation of the picture (in the immediate vicinity there are two later paper stickers, the lower of which, now cropped, possibly covered further parts of the dealer's mark)

### Ground

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



### Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique:	presumably lead or graphite pencil
Extent/character	contours of the shore and rocks briskly outlined, in some cases parallel strokes attest to the exploratory character of the underdrawing (figs 5, 8)
Pentimenti	–

### Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision	linear and arc-shaped brushstrokes of varying size and length integrate the unprimed surface of the wood into the picture, the more so in the peripheral regions; both the saturated and the half-dry looking paint applications give the impression that the unprimed and possibly only weakly sized surface strongly absorbed the binding medium of the paint (figs 9, 10)
Painting tools	flat-ferrule (bristle-)brushes of varying breadth
Surface structure	generally smooth, impasto where saturated
Palette	microscopic visual inspection reveals: white, yellow, orange, pale green, medium blue, dark blue (signature); Vis spectrometry: chrome yellow(?), cadmium yellow(?), cobalt blue; quantity of green pigment too small to be measured
Binding mediums	presumably oil

### Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition	varnished, not authentic
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### Signature/Mark

When?	autograph signature applied when the painting was sold to the Galerie Goldschmidt in the early 1920s [Cachin/Ferretti-Bocquillon 2000, p. 219] (fig. 7)
Autograph signature	yes, with a brush in dark-blue paint
Serial	–

### Frame

Authenticity	not original
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### State of preservation

Picture support and painting are generally in good condition; the important change in the colour composition is due to the heavy darkening of the probably originally very pale, almost white, poplar (figs 1, 11, 12); in addition, a high-gloss, albeit barely yellowed layer of varnish has contributed to the saturation of the paints and of the exposed wood; the picture has been retouched here and there, especially where there are traces of abrasion (see below) at the upper edge and in the region of the rock on the right (fig. 4).

### Additional remarks

Fingerprints and traces of abrasion in the still wet paint at the upper edge and in the region of the right-hand rock; in the same context there are groove-like markings in the surface of the wood (figs 3, 10).



## 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. 157, pp. 358-359, with ill.
- Cachin/Ferretti-Bocquillon 2000: Françoise Cachin, Marina Ferretti-Bocquillon: Signac. *Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint*, Paris 2000, p. 219, ill. 271, Pré-catalogue: p. 236 (6)

## 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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Fig. 1  
Recto



Fig. 2  
Verso





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Fig. 3  
Raking light



Fig. 4  
UV fluorescence







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Fig. 5  
IR reflectogram



Fig. 6  
X-ray





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Fig. 7  
Detail, signature



Fig. 8  
Detail, top edge of  
picture with fingerprints  
in paint layer

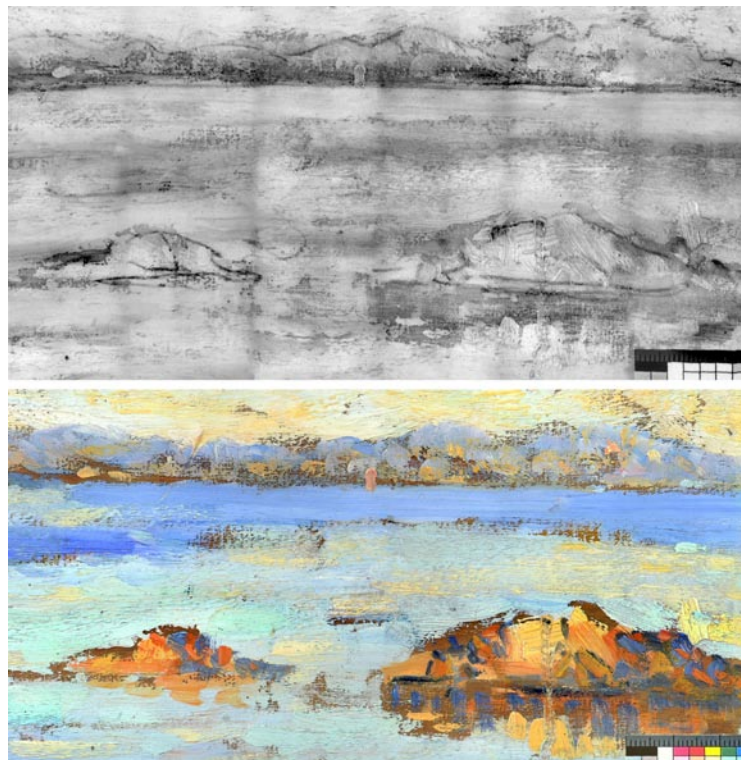






Fig. 9  
Wet-in-wet paint  
applications, microscopic  
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10  
Detail, drawn indications  
(top, IR reflectogram) and  
working-out in colour  
(bottom, normal incident  
light) of the rocks and  
the coastal scenery





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Fig. 11  
Direct comparison of  
fresh poplar (top) and  
mahogany (bottom)

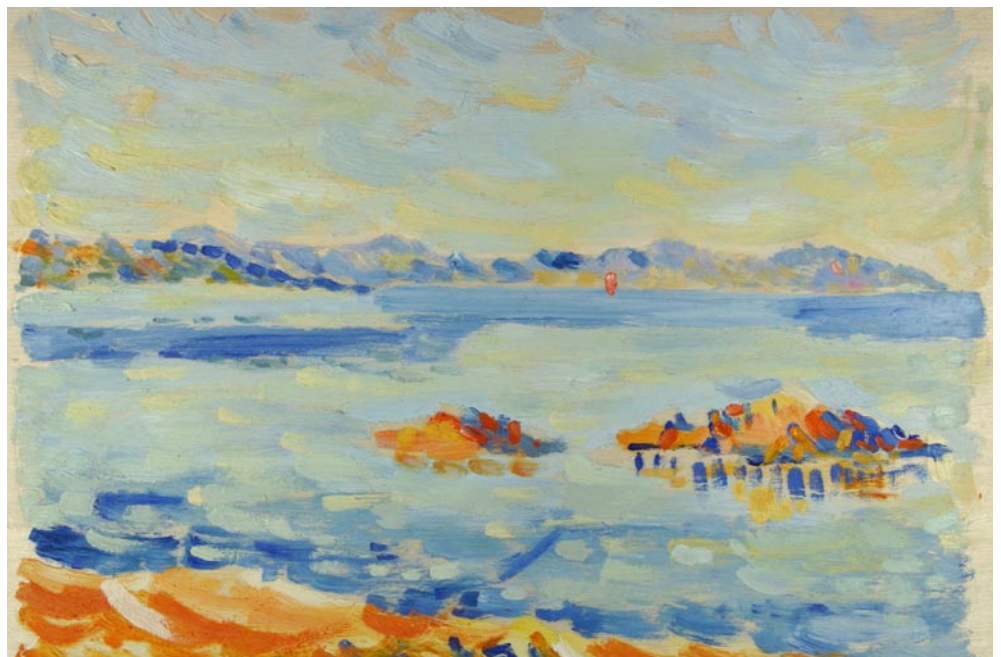


Fig. 12  
Painted reconstruction  
on fresh poplar panel