



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
(1864-1901)

Fishing-boat
(Barque de pêche)

c. 1880

unsigned, no date

oil on poplar

h 14.0 cm x b 23.3 cm

WRM Dep. FC 719





Brief Report

This small work, painted by Toulouse-Lautrec before he was 20, has a pencil underdrawing directly on the pale unprimed poplar panel, as shown by the infra-red reflectogram (figs. 1-3). The fishing scene, in the underdrawing with an additional upturned boat on the left, was painted rapidly and confidently. It would appear that Toulouse-Lautrec painted this small picture in the open air and used a palette box, or what the French call a *boîte à pouce*, as well as a thin wood panel prepared by the Parisian dealer Berville from an originally larger size in order to fit the fastening device in the lid of the box (figs. 5, 12). The unpainted edges and the fastening point at the bottom, somewhat off-centre, are characteristic signs of the use of this aid to open-air painting (figs. 1, 5).

The pale picture-support (Fr. *panneau bois blanc sans apprêt*), which was supplied specially for these palette boxes, makes its presence apparent in the painting as a highlight. Toulouse-Lautrec worked on the picture from the harmonious sky down to the foreground, placing the colour fields in loose juxtaposition. The border areas were subsequently touched up in places (fig. 8). The brush-strokes and paint consistency vary a great deal and testify to a confident and rapid working technique. (fig. 9). The last thing that Toulouse-Lautrec did was to add the small sailing-boat in the background, which is not in the underdrawing (fig. 10). On the reverse of the panel is a delicate drawing of a horse (fig. 2).



Picture support panel

Standard format	close to the standard P1 size (14.0 x 22.0 cm), horizontal
Thickness	2.0 cm
Type of wood	poplar (<i>Populus sp.</i>)
Panel structure	consists of one board
Grain direction	horizontal
Cut of panel	tangential
Traces left by production/treatment	traces of planing verso; the edges at the sides are roughly sawn (fig. 6); the roughly sawn edges and the sawdust in the paint layer indicate that an originally larger panel was cut to size immediately before painting started
Producer's/dealer's marks	top left: "L. BERVILLE – PARIS", the letters are brown and sunken, indicating a burn-mark (fig. 7)

Ground

Sizing	not determined
Colour	none
Application	—
Binding medium	—
Character and appearance	—



Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	lead or graphite pencil (fig.11)
Extent/character	drawings are present on both sides of the panel, verso inverted a study of a horse, recto the underdrawing of the present painting in rapid, confident strokes (fig. 2, 3)
Pentimenti	the underdrawing has an upturned boat on the left which is not in the painting; the man mending the net in the foreground and the recumbent boy are in slightly different positions (fig. 3)

Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision	the picture was executed in a number of steps: starting with the sky, Toulouse-Lautrec worked down to the foreground and then on the detail of the figures; in places where the paint is thin, the wood can be seen through it; the colour fields are loosely juxtaposed; the boundary zones were touched up and thickened by the artist in places (fig. 8); the picture was painted very quickly, the paint applied wet-in-wet and in highly variable consistencies; the boat in the background was added as a final detail on paint already dry (fig. 11)
Painting tools	small bristle brushes
Surface structure	highly variable, ranging from semi-transparent (sky) to strong, impasto highlights (boat and figures)
Palette	hues revealed by visual microscopic inspection: two blue tones, light red, red lake, transparent amber paint, pink (white mixture), yellow, brown, dark green, white for admixture VIS spectrometry: cobalt blue, Prussian blue, vermillion, rose madder(?), iron oxide red (barium yellow?), chrome yellow(?) or cadmium yellow(?)
Binding mediums	presumably oil



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Surface finish

Authenticity/condition	present varnish not authentic
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Signature/Mark

When?	none present
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Autograph signature	–
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Serial	–
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Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

The painting has been subsequently varnished; some retouchings on browned areas at the right-hand edge; further retouchings to the sky (fig. 4); the use of sandpaper to remove marks verso, in particular brown marks, at some time in the past has led to a loss of some of the outlines of the sketched horse.



Additional remarks

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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, cat. no. 166, p. 388 f., with ill.
- Dortu 1971: M. G. Dortu, *Toulouse-Lautrec et son oeuvre*, New York 1971, Vol. 2, No. P.80, ill. p. 37, and Vol. 4, No. D.1.642, ill. p. 271

Source of illustrations

Fig. 5: 1888 Lefranc-Bourgeois Catalogue, p. 92.

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 | |

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Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso
(the picture has been
rotated through 180°)





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Fig. 3
Infra-red reflectogram



Fig. 4
Recto under
UV fluorescence
stimulation



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Fig. 5
Detail, unpainted area
near the place at the
bottom where the panel
was fastened to the
palette box



Fig. 6
Detail of verso in raking
light; the short side is
roughly sawn



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Fig. 7
Detail, dealer's mark
verso



Fig. 8
A slightly different blue
was used by Toulouse-
Lautrec to touch up large
gaps in the paintwork,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm),



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



Fig. 10
Sailing boat in the
background, added last
of all,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



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Fig. 11
Underdrawing and
visible poplar panel
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)

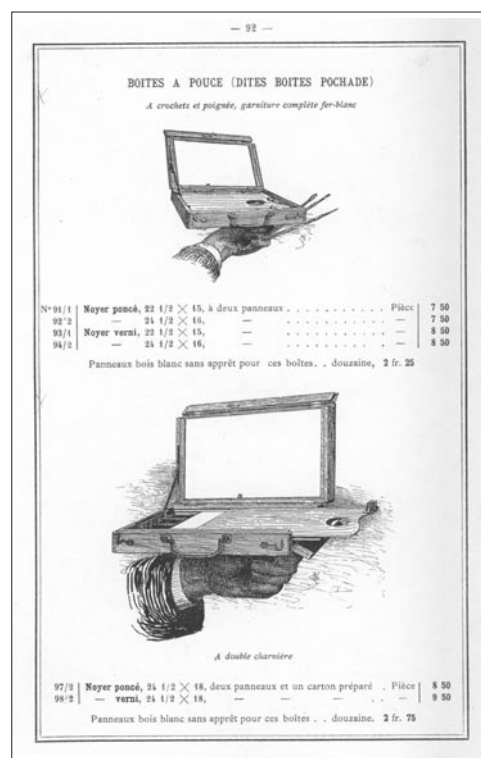


Fig. 12
Palette box in the 1888
Lefranc-Bourgeois
catalogue, p. 92:
The lower illustration
clearly shows the lateral
grooves into which the
panel was slid, the front
of the flip-up lid, and the
off-centre fastening for
the panel when inserted