



Henri Edmond Cross
(1856-1910)

Sunset over the Sea
(Coucher de soleil sur la mer)

1896

*signed and dated bottom left:
„henri Edmond Cross 96“*

Oil on canvas

h 54.3 cm x b 61.5 cm

WRM Dep. FC 708





Brief Report

Cross painted this Pointillist sunset in a bay near Saint-Clair in the south of France, which he also painted from a different angle in another picture [Compin 1964, p. 199, no. 102]. The artist used a commercially pre-primed canvas, albeit with two technical peculiarities. Firstly, the format does not match any standard dimension, although it does have a stencilled mark verso of the Parisian dealer Paul Foinet, which is usually a sure sign that the canvas was stretched and primed by this dealer (fig. 2). Apparently this canvas was specially ordered by Cross from Foinet, something that did not happen often. Further, the canvas has two layers of priming: white, and pale pink, the latter apparently corresponding to what was commercially available at the time as *rosé* or *rosé gris* [Callen 2000, p. 66].

The two layers can be seen particularly clearly on the bottom foldover edge, where the edge of the pre-primed length of canvas from which this piece was cut has been preserved (fig. 10). Following a somewhat sketchy pencil underdrawing, the first colour lay-in was applied in quite broad, dry brush-strokes, to which narrower, shorter strokes were gradually added, so that the end result is a mosaic of seemingly equal-sized brush-strokes (figs. 7, 8). It was only later, when the paint layer was completely dry, that Cross applied his signature, whose blue colour was not used anywhere else in the picture (fig. 6). The painting is in a largely authentic condition and has never been varnished.



Picture support canvas

Standard format	not a standard size
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical 29, horizontal 26/27 threads per cm; very fine, regular and close weave; the horizontal threads are generally thicker than the vertical ones (fig. 10)
Stretching	original stretching no longer extant, presumably originally stretched by the dealer; foldover edge has a large number of further holes without any signs of nail corrosion, indicating a short-lived stretching (fig. 10); it is likely that the canvas was re-stretched at least twice within a short time of being painted
Stretcher/strainer	stretcher with vertical centre-bar
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.0 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	canvas was app. 6-7 cm larger than the actual stretcher (incl. depth of stretcher); marks of stretching pliers on the left-hand foldover edge
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	stencilled inscription verso on the right-hand half: "54 RUE N.D. DES CHAMPS PARIS / PAUL FOINET / (VAN EYCK) / TOILES & COULEURS FINES", h 16.2 x b 24.5 cm (fig. 2)



Ground

Sizing	none
Colour	two layers: white and pale pink
Application	ground applied before cutting-to-size and stretching; two layers: white (one coat, very thin) and pale pink (presumably two coats); the unprimed edge of the canvas on the lower foldover edge derives from the stretching of the uncut length of canvas which was primed in the factory: there are three traces of nails, in the form of holes with large corroded surrounds (Ø 1.2 cm) and corresponding stretchmarks extending well into the picture; clearly discernible here are the marks left by the edges of a tool such as a trowel or palette knife (fig. 10)
Binding medium	presumably oil
Texture	very thin, smooth and even application; canvas structure remains visible; microscopically homogeneous layers with white oval pigment inclusions (lead white?), isolated black particles and fine red pigmentation in the pale pink

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	lead or graphite pencil discernible by stereomicroscopy and IR reflectography; overwhelmingly soft lines of different breadths ranging from 0.1-0.4 cm (figs. 5, 11)
Extent/character	pencil lines only discernible in the spit of land, but it is entirely possible that other areas (e.g. the horizon, clouds, sun) were also underdrawn; however the high proportion of white makes them largely impenetrable to IR radiation; brisk hand-drawing of a few outlines; a few straight lines and arcs summarize the vegetation on the shore (fig. 5)
Pentimenti	the boat was apparently not planned in the underdrawing, as the outlines were sketched later in blue paint with a pointed brush after the paint of the sea had already dried (fig. 9)



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Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

Pointillist painting technique largely wet on dry, occasionally wet on wet; the sequence as follows: first the large dry brush-strokes up to app. 3-4 cm broad, the sky in pale blue, reflections in the water in pale yellow, the shore in green and pink, reflections in the water in blue and green; little by little Cross covered these areas with short, largely horizontal brush-strokes, in such a way that the underlying applications of paint and occasionally the pink ground remained visible (fig. 7, 8)

Painting tools

various bristle brushes of widths varying from 0.3/0.4 cm to 3-4 cm

Surface structure

brushwork visible throughout, slightly impasto

Palette

visual microscopic inspection reveals: white, pale yellow, medium yellow, orange, medium red, pale red lake (pale magenta fluorescence in UV, fig. 4), dark red lake, violet, pale transparent blue (only for signature), dark blue, pale green, dark green, black; generally numerous shades were obtained by blending and by addition of white; VIS spectrometry: chrome yellow(?), chrome orange(?), vermillion, rose madder(?), cobalt blue, cobalt violet, viridian

Binding mediums

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Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition

authentic, no varnish or other surface coating



Signature/Mark

When?	signature added later on dry paint layer, with a pointed brush in a semi-transparent blue not present in the rest of the picture (fig. 5)
Autograph signature	very probable; craquelure due to aging matches that in the picture itself; the handwriting of the signature is typical of Cross and is found particularly often in the years 1896-99 [Compin 1964, p. 84]
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

Slight deformation in the canvas; fine craquelure due to aging, in places more pronounced; striking fine craquelure in the dark-green of the shore (intrinsic to the material?); occasional irregularities in the saturation of the blue paint applications (fig. 12).

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. 25, p. 72, with. ill.
- Compin 1964: Isabelle Compin, *E. H. Cross*, Paris 1964
- Callen 2000: Anthea Callen, *The Art of Impressionism, Painting techniques and the making of modernity*, New Haven/London 2000



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 | |

Author of examination: Caroline von Saint-George

Date: 11/2006

Author of brief report: Caroline von Saint-George

Date: 10/2007



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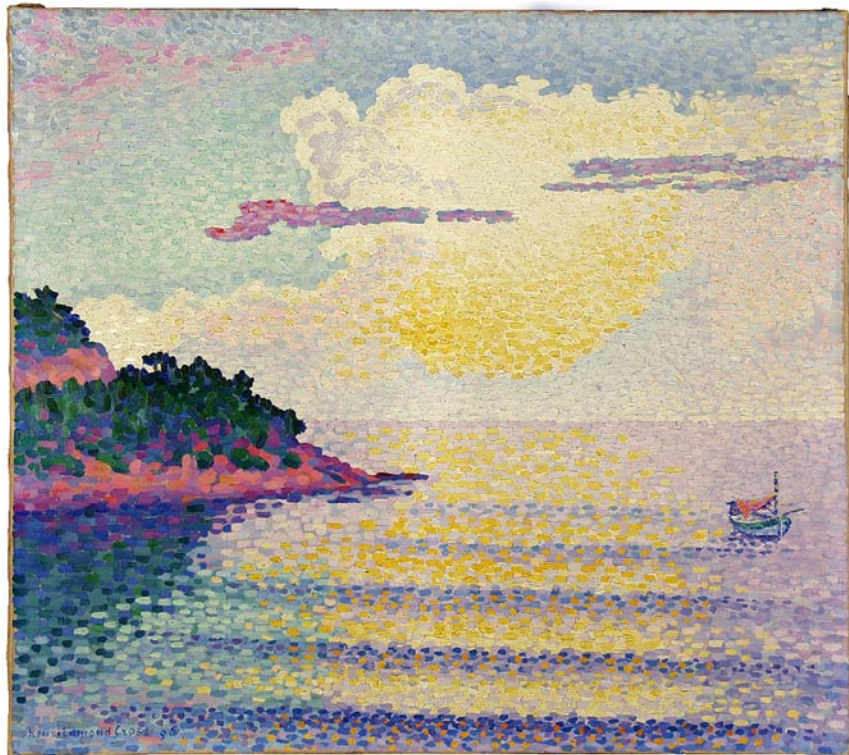


Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso



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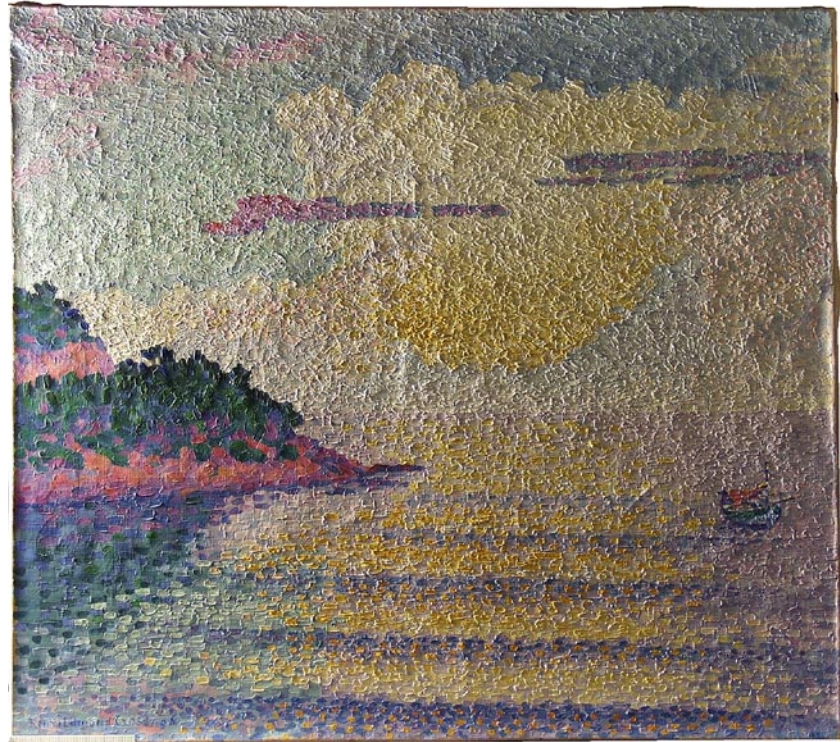


Fig. 3
Raking light

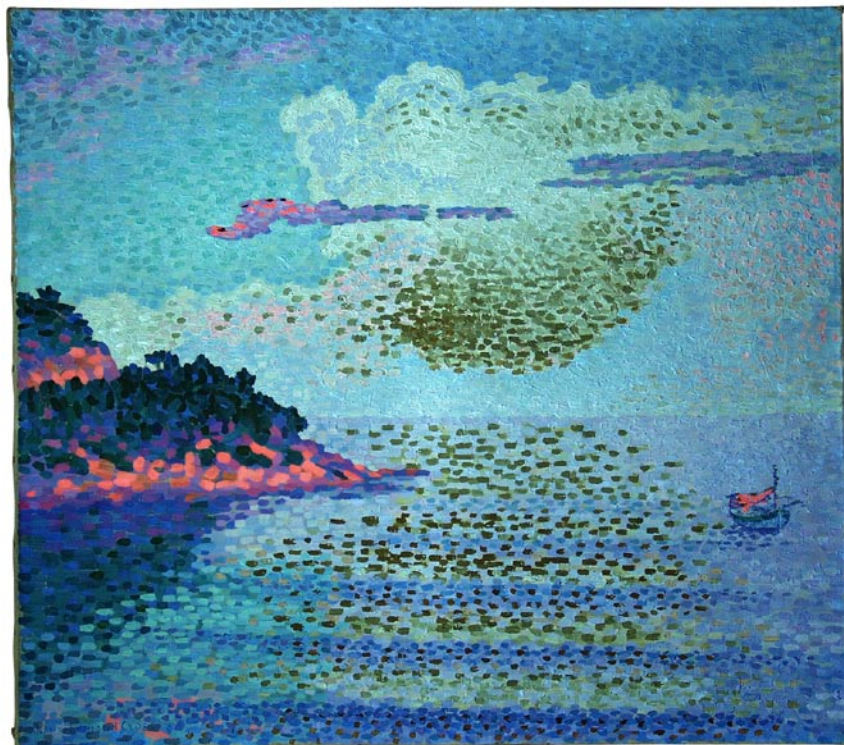


Fig. 4
UV-fluorescence
photograph



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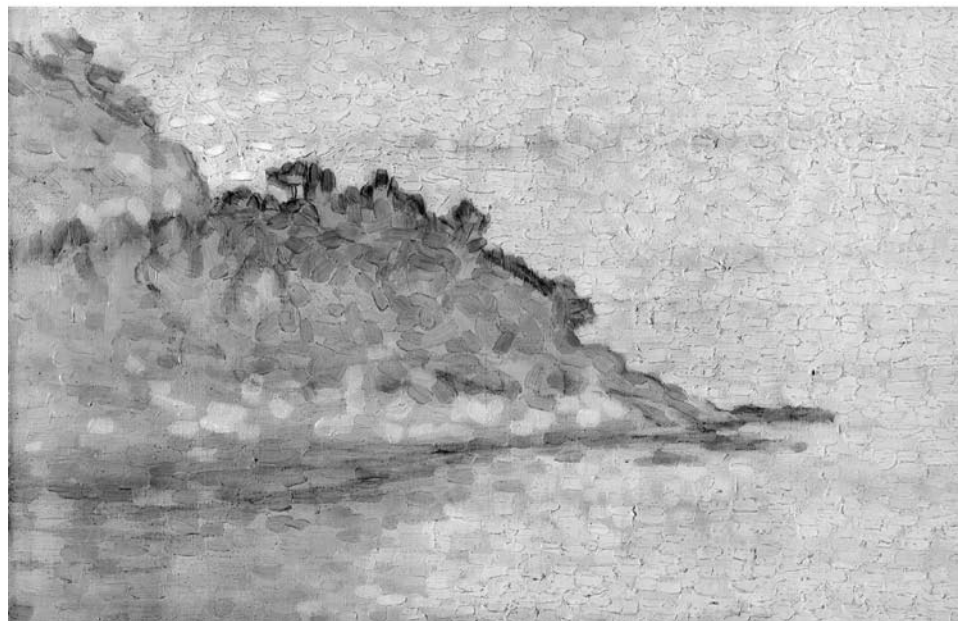
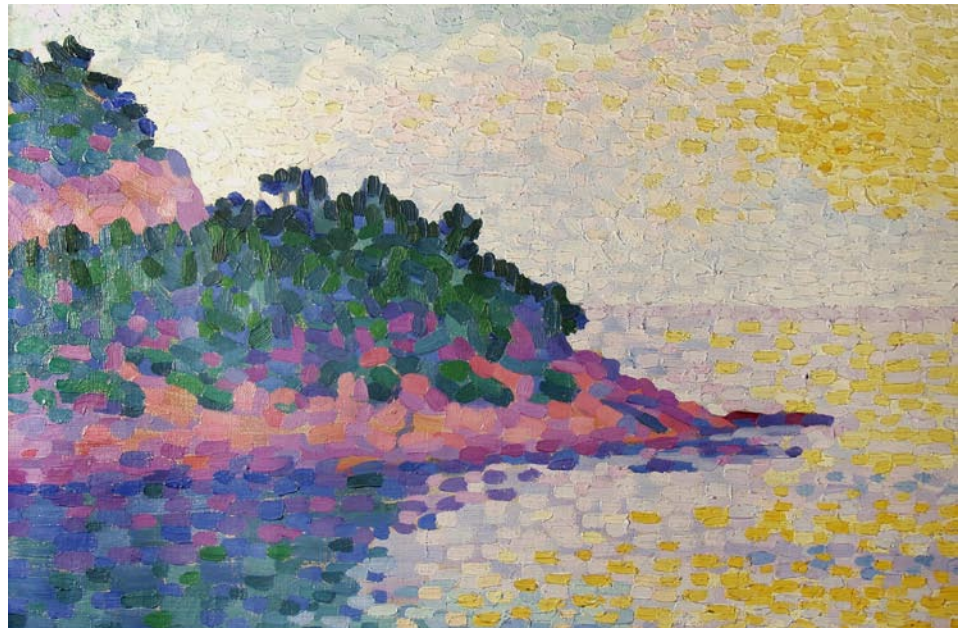


Fig. 5
Detail, incident
light (top) and IR
reflectography (bottom)



Fig. 6
Detail signature



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Fig. 7
Detail, sky, two-layered
paint-layer structure,
broad pale-blue and
white brush-strokes
covered by later dabs
of colour



Fig. 8
Detail, spit of land,
two-layered paint-layer
structure, broad dry
brush-strokes in pink
and green covered by
shorter colour dabs





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Fig. 9
Detail, boat, outlines
were only painted in
blue after the underlying
paint had dried

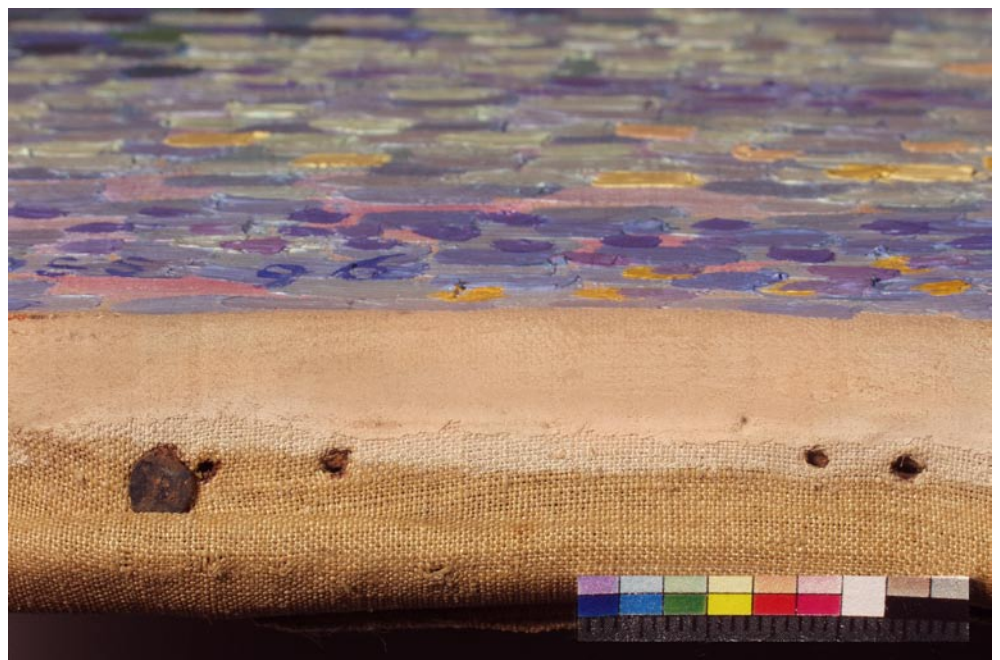


Fig. 10
Detail of lower
foldover edge, two
layers of ground,
white and pale pink



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Fig. 11
Pencil underdrawing on
pink ground, microscopic
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12
Irregularities in the
saturation of the blue
paint application, micro-
scopic photograph (M =
1 mm)